

2BU! / C1

**Newsmakers, music, athletes, gadgets, fashion that rocked 2007**

## At long last, a cheerful Christmas in Bethlehem

BETHLEHEM, WEST BANK—ENCOURAGED by renewed peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians, Christian pilgrims from around the world converged on the town of Jesus' birth on Monday to celebrate Christmas—a palpable contrast to the sparse crowds of recent years.

The diverse mix of people included festive

A CHEERFUL/AS

METRO / A17

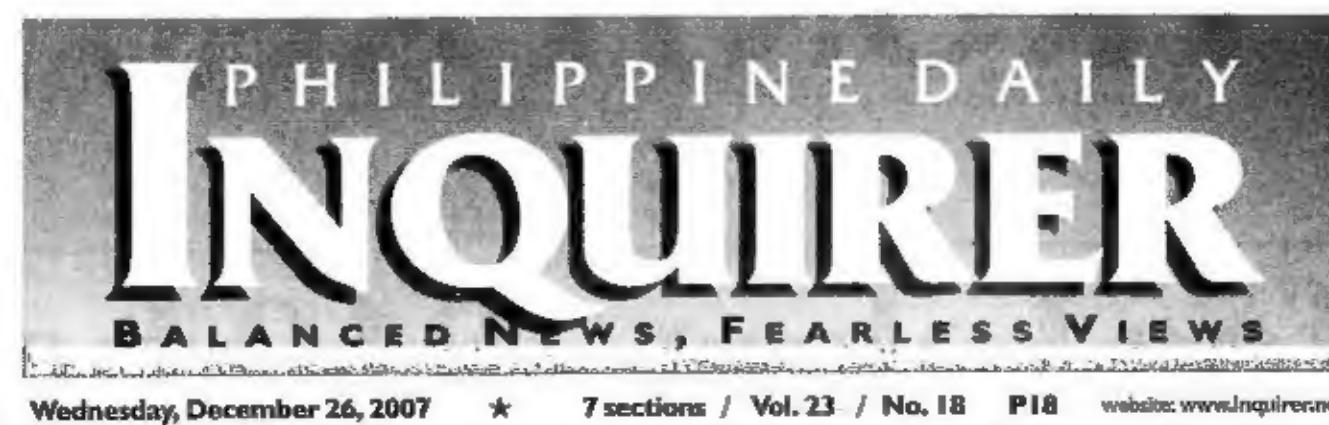
**QC court orders Ayala Land subsidiary to pay P90M to inventor**

ENTERTAINMENT / E5

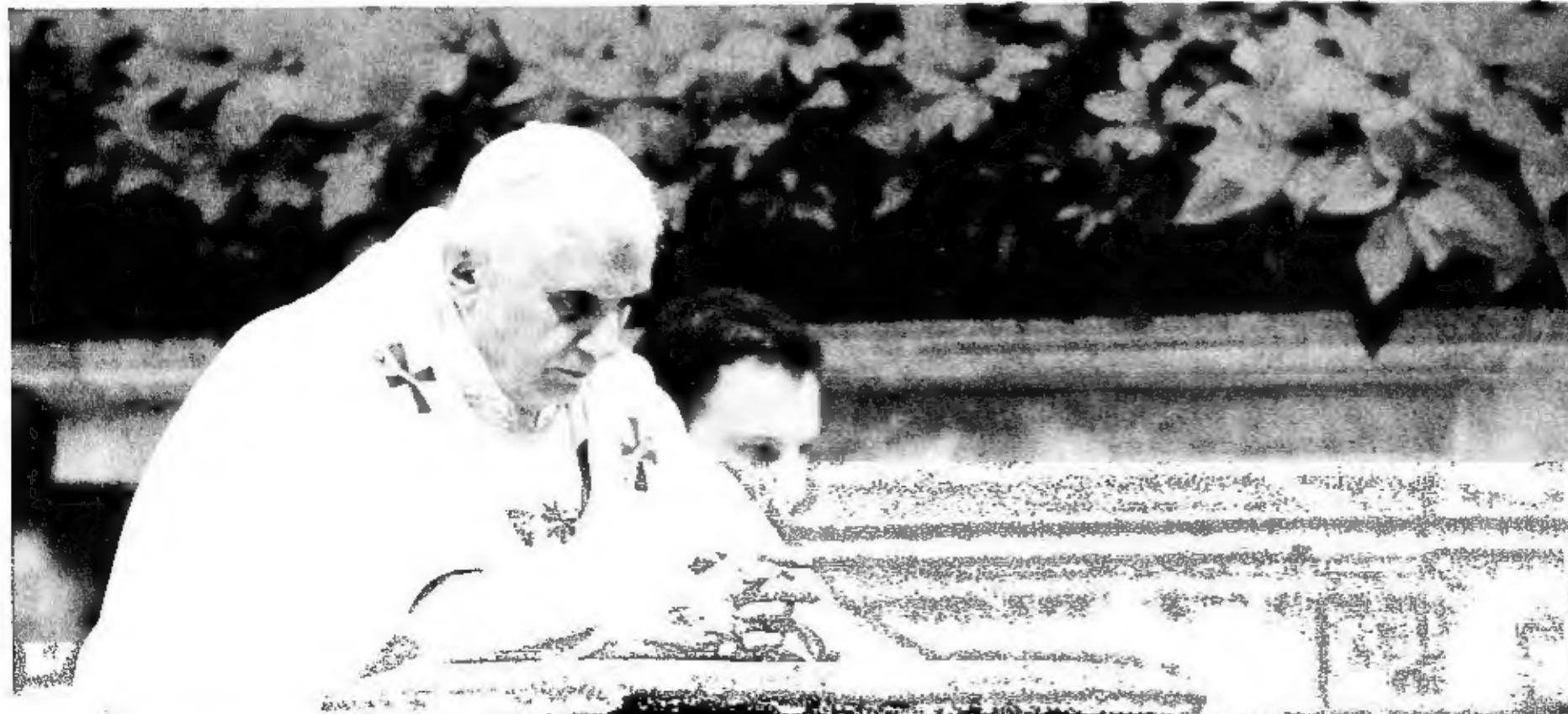
**Dolly Wood: Lessons that 2007 taught the stars**

WORLD / A19

**Thaksin to return to Thailand from exile**



Wednesday, December 26, 2007 ★ 7 sections / Vol. 23 / No. 18 P18 website: www.inquirer.net



POPE Benedict XVI ushers in Christmas as he celebrates Midnight Mass at the St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

VATICAN CITY—POPE BENEDICT ON Tuesday said he hoped Christmas would bring consolation to those living in poverty, injustice and war and appealed for just solutions to conflicts in Iraq, the Holy Land, Afghanistan and Africa.

In his "Urbi et Orbi" (To the City and the World) Christmas Day message, the Pope also urged people in modern societies to accept the light of Christ and warned that many human tragedies were caused by environmental upheavals.

Wearing gold-embroidered vestments and a bejeweled bishops' hat, or mitre, Benedict urged the crowd to rejoice over the celebration of Christ's birth, which he said he hoped would bring consolation to all people "who live in the darkness of poverty, injustice and war."

"May this Christmas truly be for all people a day of joy, hope and peace," he said in his address from the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica to tens of thousands of people gathered below under a brilliant winter sun.

The address was broadcast live to some 57 countries.

Earlier, in a Midnight Mass ushering

POPE PRAYS/AS

# ‘Why kill journalists?’

## Medical tourism law pushed

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE PHILIPPINE MEDICAL Tourism Program (PMTP) has earned some \$350 million and opened satellite offices in two cities in Europe, and is preparing for a "road show" in three other cities in the same continent next year.

And yet, more efforts are being exerted to boost the country's quiet moneymaker. Government officials steering the PMTP are preparing a Medical Tourism Bill that would "institutionalize" the thriving sector responsible for the Philippines' added prominence on the global medical map.

"We really need all the support we can get, and this includes support from our Congress," said Dr. Jade del Mundo, head of the highly successful program.

MEDICAL/A7



WHY didn't they just talk to his father instead of killing him? asks Jan Marc Lintuan, the eldest son of slain Davao City broadcaster Ferdie Lintuan.

DENNIS JAY SANTOS/INQUIRER MINDANAO

## Slain radioman's son appeals to gunman

By Dennis Jay Santos *Inquirer Mindanao* and Alcuin Papa *in Manila*

DAVAO CITY—ON CHRISTMAS EVE, JAN MARC Lintuan sent his brothers to sleep. Then, he stayed up all night—for his father's wake.

Only 20 and the eldest of four sons of slain radio broadcaster Fernando "Ferdie" Lintuan, Jan Marc yesterday sent out a message to the killer of his father: "Please stop these killings of media men. If you have a deep hatred or were personally hurt by the journalist's work, why can't you just talk to the reporter and air your side? Why kill them when they are just doing their job?"

In Manila, the Philippine National Police said it would look into any possible involvement of the so-called Davao Death

Squad in the murder of Lintuan, who was known for his denunciations of official corruption and government wrongdoings in his radio commentaries.

"We are looking at that link. That is one of the angles that we are looking into," PNP Director General Avelino Razon told the INQUIRER.

Lintuan, 51, was shot dead in his car the other day by a man riding on a motorcycle and wearing a metallic helmet.

Razon also said he had ordered the Region 11 police com-

WHY KILL/A7

## Fight against corruption still on, says freed rebel soldier

By Nikko Dizon

THE DAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS, former Air Force 2nd Lt. Jeveehboy "Maki" Macarubbo made the nine-hour bus trip to his hometown in Iguig, Cagayan, to surprise his parents whom he had seen only once in

the four years that he was detained at Villamor Air Base.

Throughout the trip that began at 3 a.m. in Manila, the 28-year-old Macarubbo said he was thinking of how his parents, Abelardo and Myrna, and town mates would react upon seeing him.

"Then, I also thought, am I really on a bus? It was surreal yet so nice," he said in a Yahoo! message to the Inquirer a few hours after arriving home.

Macarubbo was obviously relishing his newfound freedom—like being able to use the Internet, a mobile phone, and,

yes, walking around without being handcuffed to a military escort.

He laughed and said he had forgotten how to cross the street. When he strolled around Mall of Asia, he thought he had this big smile on his face.

It has been less than a week

since the surprise release of Macarubbo and 52 other sub-leaders of Magdalo—a group of disgruntled junior officers who seized the Oakwood commercial complex in Makati City in July 2003.

The mass release came after

FIGHT/A4

## 39TH ANNIVERSARY Joma recalls birth of CPP in Alaminos

By Gabriel Cardinoza *Inquirer Northern Luzon*

ALAMINOS CITY—THE COMMUNIST Party of the Philippines marks its 39th anniversary today, but few residents of this bustling coastal city in western Pangasinan know that the CPP was born in one of their upland barangays.

Mayor Hernani Braganza, a former member of the Ka-

bataang Makabayan, a leftist group that went underground when martial law was declared in 1972, said he learned about this fact only in 2001. He was then the agrarian reform secretary and member of the government panel engaged in peace talks with the CPP's political arm, the National Democratic Front (NDF).

Braganza said it was CPP

JOMA/A1



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ALAMINOS CITY GOVERNMENT  
THE Navarrete house in Barangay Dulacac in Alaminos City played a significant role in the founding of the CPP in 1968.

## 7 medical myths exposed in journal

READING IN DIM LIGHT WON'T damage your eyes, you don't need eight glasses of water a day to stay healthy, and shaving your legs won't make the hair grow back faster.

These well-worn theories are among seven "medical myths" exposed in a paper published on Friday in the British Medical Journal, which traditionally carries light-hearted features in its Christmas edition.

Two US researchers took sev-

7 MEDICAL/A4



SISON: In self-exile in The Netherlands. INQUIRERPHOTO

## WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will have mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will experience partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers.

Tell us your feedback: Inquirer news name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

# Second FRONT PAGE

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Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Rain/Showers	Mostly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Mostly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Mostly Cloudy	Cebu	Mostly Cloudy
La Union	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Mostly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Don. Santos	Mostly Cloudy
Taytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Mostly Cloudy
Legazpi	Mostly Cloudy	Gagaon de Oro	Mostly Cloudy
Cavite	Mostly Cloudy	Davao	Mostly Cloudy

COMPILED BY: SCHATO OCONDA, PB INQUIRER/12/25/07

SOURCE: PAGASA

# Search for Lakas 2010 bet is on

## Ruling party seeking coalition with NP, LP

By Michael Lim Ubac and Norman Bordadora

THE RULING LAKAS-CHRISTIAN MUSLIM DEMOCRATS HAS opened the selection process for its standard bearer in the 2010 elections, even as it eyes a possible coalition with either the Nationalist Party of Senate President Manuel Villar or the Liberal Party of Senator Manuel "Mar" Roxas.

In a meeting last week with Lakas congressmen, Speaker Jose de Venecia declared that "Lakas will choose its own (presidential) candidate. Nobody can dictate on us."

In other words, the party, not President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, will have the last say on who will be the standard bearer of what is currently the country's largest political party.

### Our own bet

"We said that we'd like to choose our own candidate," said Lakas executive director Ray Roquero in a phone interview.

Ms Arroyo won the vice presidency in 1998 under Lakas, although its presidential candidate, De Venecia, lost to popular actor and former vice president Joseph Estrada. Ms Arroyo assumed the Presidency in 2001 when Estrada was ousted by a 4-day "people power" revolt. She ran again under Lakas in 2004, winning a six-year mandate. She cannot run for reelection.

Arroyo is Lakas chair while former President Fidel Ramos and De Venecia are chair emeritus and president, respectively.

### Shallow bench

"Lakas is open to adopting candidates," said Roquero.

Roquero admitted that Lakas has a shallow bench when it comes to personalities who figure strongly in national surveys or who are likely to win the 2010 presidential derby.

"We have to admit that our bench is not deep at this time," he said.

Roquero, however, said that Lakas' national membership and machinery affords it the leverage to stay significant in the next elections.

Lakas boasts of 95 congressmen, 42 governors, 96 city mayors and 1,200

municipal mayors.

Although turncoatism is a hallmark of Philippine politics, Roquero said he was confident Lakas will remain the dominant majority party.

Names being floated as possible presidential candidates are Senators Villar, Roxas, Loren Legarda and Richard Gordon, and even Vice President Noli De Castro, he said.

Roquero revealed that "high level negotiations" are in the works for a possible coalition with the NP.

But he said talks for a possible party coalition were not limited to NP as the ruling party was also considering Roxas' LP party.

"A Lakas top honcho has been meeting with Mar Roxas," said Roquero, but noted that the Speaker has also kept close ties with Villar, attending the NP's 100th anniversary celebration in November.

On the other hand, several Lakas members who did not want to be identified since they were not authorized to talk on the matter, told the INQUIRER that they were pushing for the adoption of Legarda, who topped the May 10 mid-term elections under the Genuine Opposition slate.

Other Lakas members want their own "homegrown talents" to lead the party to victory such as Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando "who is courting FVR's support," said another Lakas member.

Lakas will hold a strategic planning workshop on Jan. 7 and 8 to map out their plans for 2010 and launch a party-strengthening drive, said Roquero.

It will adopt a criteria for the selection of bets and a formula for entering into coalitions with other parties, he said.

With a report by Gil Cabacungan Jr.

### TALE OF TWO CONVICTS

## Erap's wish: United country

By Kristine L. Alave and Jocelyn R. Uy

FORMER PRESIDENT JOSEPH "Erap" Estrada yesterday said that his Christmas wish this year was for a united country.

"Let this Christmas be the season for us to unite and celebrate our commitment to bring forth a new nation under God which is just, peaceful and prosperous," Estrada in his first Christmas message as a free man.

It was the first time since his detention six years ago that Estrada spent the Christmas season at Polk St. San Juan City as a free man.

Estrada, who was convicted of plunder and later pardoned, also thanked his supporters for standing by him throughout his plunder

trial at the Sandiganbayan.

Estrada's call for unity came two weeks after he revealed that he had "forgiven" President Macapagal-Arroyo, who replaced him after he was ousted in a bloodless revolution in January 2001, and ex-Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson, his former best friend whose accusations led to his impeachment trial and his eventual downfall.

He has decided to forgive his political enemies because it was the right thing and Christian thing to do, Estrada explained.

"I have said time and again that the Holy Spirit put into my mind and my heart that to live peacefully, forget all the good things you did to others and forget the bad things that

others did to you. That is why I am living peacefully now," Estrada said.

He reiterated his pledge to the poor that he will commit himself to antipoverty projects.

The former president kicked off his Christmas Day celebration with his son, Mayor JV Ejercito by attending the Miss De Gallo held at the San Juan plaza on the night of Dec. 24.

Estrada said this Christmas was the "most meaningful" yet for him, noting that this was the first Yuletide celebration in six years where he could celebrate freely with his friends and loved ones.

"I've nothing more to ask. My wish is for the country, that it will no longer be [plagued] with graft and corruption," said Estrada.

## Jalosjos: Not quite orange

By Julie S. Alipala  
Inquirer Mindanao

ZAMBOANGA CITY—VISITORS and food flooded the San Ramon Prison and Penal Farm Colony, some 30 kilometers outside this city, where recalled convict Romeo Jalosjos spent Christmas Day.

"There were so many luxury cars parked outside. So many people going inside and leaving the prison farm," said a resident, who asked not to be identified.

"A resident said it was the first time it has happened.

Jalosjos was supposedly released by prison authorities on Dec. 17 after he reportedly completed his life term for child abuse. But after a public outcry, the justice department recalled his release, saying the warden had miscalculated his release date.

He had sadly dubbed this an "orange Christmas," referring to the

color of prison uniforms, although he has not actually donned his orange clothes yet, according to his son, Seith Frederick "Bullet" Jalosjos, Zamboanga del Norte's First District board member.

"They (penal officials) don't oblige my father to wear it," Seith told the INQUIRER in a phone interview. "He is no longer a prisoner. He has served his sentence," he added.

Besides, joked the young Jalosjos, "even if they force him to wear the uniform, they don't have the size of my father."

"All he wants for Christmas is to clear this chaos. My father is a free man and his wish is for the government to let him go and enjoy his freedom."

While personnel of the San Ramon prison refused to be interviewed, the Jalosjoses confirmed that the former congressman has been receiving many visitors since he was

brought there on December 23.

According to his son, visitors included relatives, childhood friends from this city and hometown Dapitan, and even local officials from Zamboanga del Norte.

The young Jalosjos said members of the family, including his 85-year-old grandmother Angelina, have been staying with his father since Sunday "to make him feel comfortable and happy with his situation."

The entire Jalosjos family attended Mass inside the prison farm at 10:30 p.m. Monday.

"We are trying our best to lift up his spirits this Christmas," the young Jalosjos said.

"The office of the provincial superintendent is being used as his temporary sleeping quarters. Since it doesn't have anything inside except what is needed for an office, we immediately brought some mattresses and airconditioning," he said.

## Town mayor shot dead on Christmas Day

By Frank Cimatu  
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—IT WAS A BLOODY CHRISTMAS for residents of Paracelis, Mt. Province.

The town's mayor was shot dead by gunmen as he was leaving a family gathering in Barangay Palitod, provincial and police officials said.

Mt. Province Gov. Maximo Dalog said Paracelis Mayor Cesar Rafael just came from a picnic with relatives in Sitio Sinukib when he was shot by a group of armed men on Tuesday afternoon.

Dalog said Rafael, who was in his 60s, was alone when he was attacked.

But reports from Senior Supt. Joseph Adnol, Mt. Province police director, said Rafael was with his driver when the suspects fired at their vehicle at past 1 p.m.

Adnol could not provide other details of the incident.

"This was the first time that a politician was shot dead in the province, and to think that it has to happen on Christmas Day," Dalog told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview.

"This has to be solved immediately. I want the (police) to do their investigation as soon as possible," he said.

Rafael, a long-time mayor of Paracelis, was recently elected president of the mayors' league of Mt. Province. His daughter, Anna Maria Paz Rafael-Banaag, is mayor of nearby Natiron town.

A community organizer in the province said it was surprising for Rafael to be attacked in Palitod because the village is his bailiwick.

"He owned a huge tract of land there. He even donated his house to be turned into a school there," the source said.

Paracelis is more than four hours drive from the capital town of Bontoc. The town shares borders with Isabela, Kalinga and Ifugao. With a report from Desires Caluza, Inquirer N. Luzon

## BCDA

### INVITATION FOR PROPOSALS

Republic of the Philippines

#### DAMPE SERVICE AREA OF THE SUBIC-CLARK-TARLAC EXPRESSWAY

The Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) is inviting interested oil companies to participate in the bidding for the privatization and development of the 2-hectare portion of the Dampe Service Area of the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway (Sta. 21+730 Subic-bound).

Interested oil companies should submit their Letters of Interest to BCDA and must purchase the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the disposition that outlines, among others, the requirements that will enable the oil companies to participate in the bidding for the privatization.

The TOR for the disposition will be ready for distribution to interested proponents from 20 December 2007 to 09 January 2008 at the BCDA Corporate Center. A non-refundable fee of Php 20,000.00 will be charged for the TOR and payable to the BCDA in Cash or Manager's Check.

A conference among interested oil companies is tentatively set on 11 January 2008, at 10:00 a.m., at the BCDA Corporate Center. The objective of the conference is to discuss the Property, the TOR, and other clarifications from interested proponents. Interested proponents will be informed of the final schedule and venue of the conference through the contact numbers submitted to the BCDA.

Interested proponents can direct their inquiries to:

MR. VICTOR V. ZABLAN

Asset Disposition Program Committee Phase 3  
Bases Conversion and Development Authority  
BCDA Corporate Center, 2/F Bonifacio Technology Center, 31<sup>st</sup> St.  
Crescent Park West, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City

or they can contact Engr. Valente R. Aquino at telephone numbers 816-6666 loc. 124 and 816-1043; email address: [vraquino@bcda.gov.ph](mailto:vraquino@bcda.gov.ph)

(Sgd.) MR. VICTOR V. ZABLAN  
Chairperson, Asset Disposition Program Committee Phase 3

(PDI-Dec. 26, 2007 & Jan. 2, 2008)

#### REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH - EASTERN VISAYAS Government Center, Candaba, Palo, Leyte

#### INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Government of the Philippines (GOP) has received loan proceeds from Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) for the implementation of the Schistosomiasis Control component of the Help for Calubig Agricultural Advancement Project (HCAAP) in the municipalities of Caticlan and Las Navas, Northern Samar.

The DOH-Eastern Visayas, through the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) now calls for the submission of Letters of Intent (LOI) from potential bidders to apply for eligibility and shortlisting for consulting services for the implementation of the project, to wit:

1. Project Implementer for Small Survey (project duration – 4 months)
2. Project Implementer for Prevalence Survey and Treatment (project duration – 4 months)
3. Project Implementer for Health Promotion and Advocacy (project duration – 2 months)

Interested consultants must submit their LOI and accomplished Eligibility Documents on or before December 28, 2007 at DOH-Eastern Visayas, Government Center, Candaba, Palo, Leyte and secure the Eligibility Documents therefrom. Applications for eligibility will be evaluated on a "pass/fail" basis. Only those that are short-listed will be entitled to submit

The BAC shall draw up the short list of consultants from those who have submitted Letters of Intent and have been determined as eligible both in accordance with the provisions of Republic Act 9164 (RA 9164) and its Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A). The short list of prospective bidders shall consist of five (5) consultants. The criteria and rating system for shortlisting are:

- 30% Applicable experience of the consultant and its partner(s) in case of joint ventures (JV), considering both the overall experiences of the firm and the individual experiences of the principal and key staff including the times when employed by other firms;
- 40% Qualification of personnel who may be assigned to the job vis-a-vis extent and complexity of the undertaking; and
- 30% Current workload relative to capacity.

Letter of Intent and accomplished Eligibility Documents must be delivered by hand, through mail, or facsimile to the address below on or before December 28, 2007.

A pre-bid conference will be conducted on January 18, 2008. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the IRR-A of RA 9164 on February 6, 2008. In accordance with the IRR-A of RA 9164, only bids from short listed consultants will be opened. The process for the eligibility check

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# Joma recalls birth of CPP in Alaminos

From page A1

founding chair Jose Ma. Sison who told him about it during a meeting in the Netherlands, where the latter has lived in self-exile since the late 1980s.

Sison, the chief political consultant of the NDF, confirmed in an e-mail to the INQUIRER that it was in a "barrio" in Alaminos where the CPP "congress of reestablishment" was held on Dec. 26, 1968.

According to Braganza, that barrio is the remote Barangay Dulacac at the tri-boundary of Alaminos and the towns of Bani and Mabini.

Sison said the meeting place was a hut near the house of the Navarettes, the parents-in-law of Arthur Garcia, one of the CPP founders. Garcia died in 1969.

## Christmas Day

"We did not use the Navarette house [for the congress] but a smaller type of bamboo house used for rest from farm work," Sison said. "We had to walk for some 30 minutes from the Navarette

house to the smaller house." Sison said the CPP founders arrived in Alaminos by Pantranco bus from Metro Manila on Christmas Day in two batches, and walked from the bus terminal all the way to the site.

The place was chosen because "it was safe, secluded and distant enough from Manila," Sison said.

He said Garcia's in-laws and wife were not aware of the nature of the meeting: "They must have thought we were having a picnic."

A total of 11 delegates attended the congress, including Sison, Garcia, Carlos del Rosario and Noli Collantes, and two lookouts from a Manila trade union.

"I [will not] mention the names of the living because I do not have their permission to name them," Sison said.

Braganza said the only means of transport to Dulacac at that time was the *kalesa* (horse-drawn cart) or on horseback.

He said politicians campaigning for election had to use the dusty uphill road to Dulacac,

and "it took them a day to get there."

The road has since been paved, and travel time has been reduced to 30 minutes by car.

Alaminos, home to the Hundred Islands National Park, is now also a popular tourist spot.

## Hardly changed

But except for the paved road, Dulacac has not changed much since 1968, Braganza said. It is still a sparsely populated farming village surrounded by thick vegetation.

"I was never able to go back to the place," Sison said. "Thus, after 39 years, I have forgotten [its] name. We have long [referred to] the place ... as 'somewhere between Central and Northern Luzon."

Sison suggested that Braganza develop the site into a tourist spot and reconstruct the hut where the CPP founding congress was held.

"Since 39 years ago, the CPP has become the revolutionary party of the proletariat and the Filipino people and has been an undeniably major force in Philippine history," he said.

Braganza agreed that the CPP was "now part of our political history." He said a "marker" could be put there to indicate that the party was "born in that area."

Recalled Sison: "There should still be a tree there because one of the lookouts fell asleep on a sturdy branch and fell. I do not remember what kind of tree [it was]."

## Can't stop it

The lookout was trade unionist Mariano (Ka Duma) Lacs, who became a leading cadre of the CPP's Northern Luzon Regional Committee.

He died in Isabela in the early 1970s, Sison said.

In a statement issued to mark the CPP anniversary, Sison said the Arroyo administration could not stop the "armed revolution," which he described as a "just cause."

"The Arroyo regime cannot destroy but unwittingly causes the armed revolution to advance ... It is currently the best recruiter of the armed revolution," he said, adding:

"It is, therefore, understandable why this armed revolution is indestructible and has successfully persevered against the Marcos fascist dictatorship and the subsequent pseudo-democratic regimes."

Saying that the CPP's armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), was "gaining strength and advancing," Sison belittled the capacity of the police and military in preventing the spread of the armed revolution.

He cited "many keen observers" in saying that the military and police could occupy and control only 10 percent of Philippine territory, and that "government troops could not concentrate their maneuver units on more than 10 percent of the NPA's guerrilla fronts at any given time."

## 3 factors

Sison said the CPP was confident that its revolution would "continue to gain strength as massive corruption in government forces the masses to join the communist underground movement."

He said three factors were contributing to the "indestructibility and success" of the CPP revolution:

- The alleged failure of the system of government, which had supposedly been aggravated

# AFP, PNP forces put on red alert

THE MILITARY AND POLICE are on red alert and "defensive alert," respectively, for the 39th founding anniversary today of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

"These are just measures to ensure that our troops remain vigilant in the field [for] any attack that may occur during [the CPP] celebration," said Maj. Ramon Zagala, the Armed Forces' deputy public information chief.

He said the AFP's nationwide red alert took effect at noon yesterday.

The CPP and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), have declared a four-day truce on Dec. 24 and 25, and Dec. 31 and Jan. 1.

On the other hand, the AFP is observing a 22-day unilateral suspension of military operations (Somo) that will end midnight of Jan. 6.

"We must always be ready for any eventuality. Even if they have declared a ceasefire as well, we cannot just take their word for it," Zagala said.

Director General Avelino

Razon, chief of the Philippine National Police, said the PNP would continue to respect the Somo declared by the military.

"The PNP is on defensive alert in connection with the CPP anniversary. We are still adhering to the suspension of offensive military operations declared by the Armed Forces," Razon told the INQUIRER by phone.

He said the PNP would only "defend communities and police stations" and other government installations from any attack by the NPA, and would "refrain from launching any offensive."

Razon also said he had instructed his regional commanders to maintain a "high level of alert" in anticipation of any NPA attack.

Both the military and the police had branded the CPP-NPA truce declaration as "insincere," saying it was made a day after the insurgents attacked a police station in Hinabangan, Samar. **Nikka Dizon and Alcuin Papa**

The CPP-NPA, through party spokesperson Gregorio Rosal, had earlier declared a four-day holiday ceasefire.

He said the NPA would not launch attacks against government forces during "the traditional holiday celebrations." (See related stories in *Across the Nation*, Page A13.) **With reports from Jerome Aning and Delfin T. Mallari Jr.**

## NOW OFF THE PRESS!

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Rice Fancy P30.45

Bangus P70.90

Tilapia P60.80

Galunggong P95.120

Kamatis P40.70

Pechay P25.50

Sitaw P45.60

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SOURCE: DA-Bureau of Agricultural Statistics

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From page A1

en common beliefs and searched the archives for evidence to support them.

Despite frequent mentions in the popular press of the need to drink eight glasses of water, they found no scientific basis for the claim.

The complete lack of evidence has been recorded in a study published by the American Journal of Psychology, they said.

The other six "myths" are:

- Reading in dim light ruins your eyesight.

The majority of eye experts believe it is unlikely to do any permanent damage, but it may make you squint, blink more and have trouble focusing, the researchers said.

- Shaving makes hair grow back faster or coarser.

It has no effect on the thickness or rate of hair regrowth, studies say. But stubble lacks the finer taper of unshaven hair, giving the impression of coarseness.

- Eating turkey makes you drowsy.

It does contain an amino acid called tryptophan that is involved in sleep and mood control. But turkey has no more of the acid than chicken or minced beef. Eating lots of food and drink at Christmas are probably the real cause of sleepiness.

- We use only 10 percent of our brains.

This myth arose as early as 1907, but imaging shows no area of the brain is silent or completely inactive.

- Hair and fingernails continue to grow after death.

This idea may stem from ghoulish novelties. The researchers said the skin dries out and retracts after death, giving the appearance of longer hair or nails.

- Mobile phones are dangerous in hospitals.

Despite widespread concerns, studies have found minimal interference with medical equipment.

The research was conducted by Aaron Carroll, an assistant professor of pediatrics at the Regenstrief Institute, Indianapolis and Rachel Freeman, a fellow in children's health services research at Indiana University School of Medicine.

Reuters

From page A1

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# Cops release artist's sketch of suspected killer

By Allison W. Lopez

THE KILLER WAS STOCKY AND HAD A mole on the upper right side of his lips.

That was the description which a minor gave to the task force looking into the Monday morning murder of radio commentator Perdie Lintuan in Davao City.

With the help of the minor, whose identity has been withheld, investigators have come up with an artist's sketch of the motorcycle-riding assassin.

Task Force "Batman," coined after the name by which Lintuan was popularly known, is composed of the Philippine National Police-Criminal Investigation Detection Group, PNP Regional and Davao City police investigators, and the National Bureau of Investigation-South Eastern Mindanao Regional Office (Semro.)

## Killer was muscular

In its progress report yesterday, a copy of which was obtained by the INQUIRER, the NBI-Semro said the witness, whose identity was withheld, had described the gunman as "muscular."

He also wore a helmet, was believed to be 5'7" to 5'8", and estimated to weigh 75 kilos.

Investigators had to rely on the minor's description because Lintuan's companions at the time he was shot in his car—Edgar Banzon and Lucio Ceniza—had said they



ARTIST'S SKETCH of Lintuan's suspected killer

did not see the assailant's face because they "instinctively ducked" when the shots rang out, the report said.

## Escape routes

The dxGO broadcaster was driving along R. Castillo Street, Barangay Duterte, Agdao, Davao City, when the assassin, riding tandem on a red Honda XRM motorcycle with an accomplice, shot him twice with a .45 cal. gun.

As part of its investigation, the NBI-Semro will try to track down the possible routes taken by the suspects from the crime scene, the report said.

The NBI will also look into the cases Lintuan was involved in prior to his death. These included a complaint at the Land Transportation Office in Davao concerning a taxi driver who refused to take a passenger, leading to the driver's firing.

## NBI-Manila team

A team of 5-10 senior agents from the National Bureau of Investigation in Manila are going to Davao to conduct an inquiry.

The Department of Justice had ordered the creation of the team.

In a memorandum, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez directed NBI deputy director for regional operations services, Reynaldo Esmesralda, and deputy director for intelligence services, Ruel Lasala, to "immediately form a special team that will investigate the killing, identify perpetrators, gather evidence against them and ensure their protection."

"The slaying of a member of the press is a direct assault upon press freedom and this should not be countenanced," Gonzalez said.

Esmesralda said the NBI Manila team would coordinate with the PNP and NBI regional units in Davao City, while the NBI Tagum and General Santos City district offices would provide support.

The Manila team will be led by NBI-National Capital Region executive officer Rommel Vallejo and Criminal Investigation Division head agent Romy Bon Huy Lim.

# Medical tourism law pushed

From page A1

The draft of the bill is expected to be completed next year, and Cibac Rep. Joel Villanueva is being considered as its sponsor, Del Mundo said.

The idea is to enhance the partnership between the government and the private sector to further boost the program, he said.

According to Del Mundo, the Philippines is running fifth among Asian countries in the medical tourism industry. The field is topped by Thailand, followed by India, Singapore and Malaysia.

## 3 'high-end' fields

With a Medical Tourism Law in place, the PMTP is expected to encourage more local scientists to venture into other promising areas such as cancer cellular immunology, stem-cell therapy, and regenerative medicine.

These three "high-end" fields are the program's latest features, and the government has opened offices in Paris and Prague to introduce these to the European market, Del Mundo said.

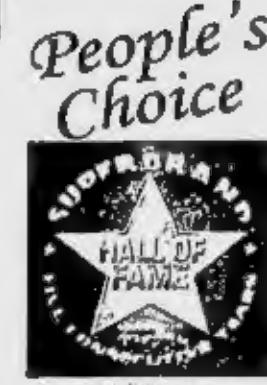
So far, he said, the three procedures had drawn some 30 European patients.

"These fields are the future of our medical tourism program," Del Mundo said.

In simpler terms, he said, the Philippines now had the technology to develop a new kidney in an ailing patient, as well as the capability to treat cancer through "immunotherapy."

Particularly involved in the three high-end procedures are National Kidney and Transplant Institute, The Medical City, St. Luke's Medical Center and Lung Center of the Philippines, Del Mundo said.

The PMTP will be further promoted in the "road show" scheduled early next year in Milan, Berlin and London, he said.



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**PLATINUM**



# 'Why kill journalists?'

From page A1

mander, Chief Supt. Andres Caro, to look at all other angles.

## Shadowy group

The Davao Death Squad is a shadowy vigilante group known for executing, sometimes in broad daylight, drug dealers and other criminals in Davao City.

It was also believed to have been behind the killing of hard-hitting journalist Jun Pala in September 2003. Pala was a critic of Davao Mayor Rodrigo Duterte.

Critics have tried to link Duterte to the group, but the mayor has repeatedly denied any such link.

Police Director Jefferson Soriano, chief of the PNP Task Force Usig, said investigators were looking into three possible motives.

## Police theories

Soriano said one possible motive might have to do with Lintuan's biting commentaries.

Another area being looked into concerned a case Lintuan had filed against another radio station in connection with his firing supposedly without justifiable reason.

Still another theory involved a complaint Lintuan had filed against a taxi driver that led to the confiscation of the driver's license.

Soriano also said Lintuan criticized illegal logging activities in the Compostela Valley and Davao Oriental.

Task Force Usig is a special police unit that investigates killings of militants and journalists.

Lintuan was the fifth journalist killed this year and the 54th media member to be murdered under the Arroyo administration, according to the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines.

The international media watchdog group Reporters Without Borders called on the Arroyo administration to "quickly track down" the murderers of Lintuan.

"On this Christmas Eve, the Philippine press community has again been hit by a terrible murder," the group said on its website.

The method used leaves no doubt that it was a targeted killing of a journalist ... President Arroyo and the national police chief have a duty to give the local investigators all the resources they need to catch the gunmen and those who put them up to it."

## Suddenly, they were orphans

Lintuan's murder suddenly left his four sons orphans. His wife died of lung cancer two years ago.

"Christmas is not merry for us," said Jan Marc, who had rushed to the crime scene shortly after news broke out about the shooting.

"I didn't expect that he will die this way (ambush)," he said in an interview with the INQUIRER.

Although several people had sent him and his brothers food for noche buena, Jan Marc said there was no reason for them to celebrate Christmas.

He stayed up all night to accept visitors at Cosmopolitan Funeral Homes, a cousin said.

Jan Marc's three brothers—Franc Ferdinand, 18; Steve, 15; and Von Carlo, 10—slept in sofas at the funeral parlor.

Printing life.



With their father gone, Jan Marc, a third year International Studies student, said he would now have to find work for them to survive.

Franc Ferdinand is also in college, while Steve and Von Carlo are in high school.

Lintuan was on his way home from work at radio station dxGO when he was shot. The two other broadcasters with him, Lucio Ceniza and Edgar Banzon, were unhurt.

## People's Park

"We will try to look if this is work-related, a personal grudge of a person he might have slighted on the air or [if this is related to] his campaign against the communist New People's Army," Senior Supt. Jaime Morente, city police chief, told the INQUIRER.

Raul Antopuesto, dxGO station manager, said that in the past weeks, Lintuan had been criticizing the recently opened "People's Park," a multimillion-peso project of the city government.

Lintuan alleged that the trees planted in the park were overpriced, Antopuesto said.

Lintuan also survived an attack by gunmen inside his radio booth at Radio Rapido, another station, in the late 1980s.

Presidential peace adviser Jesus Dureza said six of Lintuan's colleagues died in that attack.

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Missionary or terrorist? Egyptian out on bail

By Jeoffrey Maitem  
Inquirer Mindanao

COTABATO CITY—An Egyptian missionary arrested last week for allegedly plotting a Christmas bomb attack was released by police over the weekend after a local court allowed him to post bail.

Chief Supt. Joel Goltiao, police director in Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, told the Inquirer by phone that Cotabato City judge Cadir Indar had granted the petition for bail of Mohammad Sayed, a teacher of Arabic language and Islamic religion at the Mahad Islamic School here.

Sayed, identified in wire reports from Cairo as sheikh Mohammed al-Sayyid Ahmed Mussa, was arrested on Dec. 19 when a police and military team raided his rented apartment and reportedly found materials for homemade bombs, 60-mm mortar ammunition, timing devices, nine-volt batteries, schematic wiring diagrams for blasting, and a military manual of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

#### Bailable

"His illegal possession of explosives case is bailable. However, the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) has asked the immigration office in Manila to issue a hold departure order against him," said Goltiao, who also revealed that the case would be "covered by a political decision."

Sheikh Mussa, with backing of Egypt's ministry of religious affairs, is reportedly the subject of top-level negotiations.

Reports from Cairo also identified him as an envoy of Sunni Islam's highest seat of learning, the Al Azhar. The institution's grand imam had told Egypt's official Mena news agency that Mussa was arrested "by mistake" and that he was personally following up the case of Sheikh.

AFP reported that Egypt's religious affairs ministry issued a statement saying that Sheikh Mussa was being well treated but that there were contacts at the highest level between the two governments to try to secure his release.

"Sheikh Mussa is a man of faith who represents a prestigious religious institution," the ministry said.

Egyptian Ambassador Salwa Moufid Kamel Magarious visited Sayed over the weekend and said his presence in Mindanao as an Islamic missionary was covered by a bilateral agreement between the Philippines and Egypt.

But the government's Anti-Terror Council yesterday bristled at the claim that Mussa was arrested by mistake.

"We stand by the work of our operatives in the field," Ricardo Blancaflor, Justice Undersecretary and spokesperson of the Anti-Terror Council, told the INQUIRER by phone. With reports from Nikko Dizon, APP

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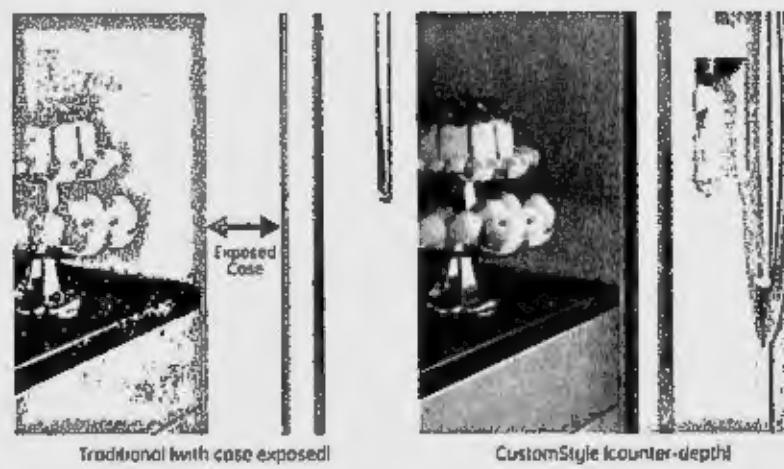
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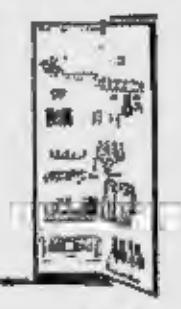
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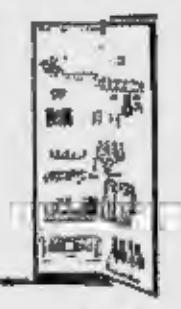
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## Fighting the real enemy

**A**S WALT KELLY'S CARTOON CHARACTER POGO once said, "We have met the enemy, and they are us." This, in a nutshell, is the problem facing the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Bravery, dedication, all the martial virtues are present, often to an extraordinary degree, in the officers and men of the AFP. The problem is that the AFP is also riddled with the corrupt, the greedy, the abusive and the stupid. And as for **EDITORIALS** arms, for the protection of the state and our soldiers' lives, the AFP never has enough, and what it has is both antiquated and poorly maintained.

Aside from the experience in waging war gained by our troops during the bloody fights in Mindanao in the 1970s, in many respects the AFP remains bogged down in the past. Its armaments more often than not belong in World War II movies; its leadership structure is top-heavy; its tactics and methods rooted in the age of Gen. Douglas MacArthur, with its over-optimistic faith in a citizen army, instead of a purely professional force.

And yet, from its grossly corrupt and bloated form achieved under martial law, the Armed Forces has gone a long way to redeem its institutional reputation. Rebels and putschists may have tarnished its image, but on the whole, our soldiers have adapted well to a republican regime grounded in civilian supremacy over the military. Our soldiers have proven themselves ours: they are the soldiers of the people and not of a clique that considers it superior to the whole.

Still the root cause of inefficiency and lack of morale remains: low salaries, insufficient benefits and antique weaponry.

It was hoped that under President Fidel V. Ramos, an ex-general, the military would be given its due. What Ramos did, instead, was pay off old debts by filling the civilian bureaucracy with ex-military appointees. And then, during a time of relative plenty, he allowed billions to be earmarked for the modernization of the AFP—and then promptly ordered that the funds be diverted to "prestige" projects, such as the Centennial Expo, that have yielded nothing but scandal.

Are we advocating guns before butter? No, but a nation that considers it necessary to maintain a standing army must give its soldiers the arms with which to justify their existence. In real terms, we do not have a real AFP; we have a glorified Philippine Constabulary. This is a situation that cannot be allowed to fester because it will result in what everyone fears: resentment and restlessness among the ranks. Our soldiers deserve better than what they're getting. And they can serve better if they get what they deserve.

We offer up this reflection because this is the time our soldiers get to go home, and enjoy, for once, peace and quiet away from operations in the field.

By now the meager bonuses of the troops will have been spent, and many of our fighting men and women can only look forward to a new year saddled with debts, and without their fair share of benefits. Meanwhile, their officers play the political game, and party up in luxury.

## What comes next

**A**FTER THE FIREWORKS, THE DRINKING, THE parties and toasts—what's next? We are at a new beginning, approaching a new year, but we are the same people.

We are not seers; it is not for us to predict what will be. But we can see what we will not be if we do not change certain things.

There will be no hope for this country if its best minds continue to be sent abroad. If its young are reared by distant relatives, and grow rootless and wild in the process. If its population continues to grow unabated. If its millions continue to be deprived of decent homes, land on which to live and the just fruits of their labor. If their leaders continue to rob, steal and cheat to an extent that in the public imagination has already surpassed the larcenous record of Ferdinand Marcos. If its forests continue to be denuded, its rivers filled with filth, its air poisoned and its agriculture is kept backward by fighting land reform.

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## Requiem for Adrian Cristobal and Peping del Rosario

IT IS A SAD CHRISTMAS FOR JOURNALISTS with the deaths of two colleagues: first, Peping del Rosario, photographer of The Manila Chronicle and later chief photographer of the Daily Express, and, a few weeks later, Adrian Cristobal, writer and intellectual. With their deaths, newsmen lost dear friends, esteemed colleagues and accomplished craftsmen.

Peping was one of the magazine photographers of the Chronicle's This Week Magazine when I joined it. Magazine staffers have enviable jobs in newspapers. They go to the provinces for special stories, usually with a photographer in tow, all at company expense. My favorite photographer was Peping.

One of my favorite assignments with Peping was a visit to Manuel Arguilla country in Nagrebcen, La Union. With Johnny Gabonton and Amante Paredes, who is an Ilocano, we stayed in the Arguilla house in Nagrebcen for less than a week and visited all the places and characters in his short stories. I remember the kakawati trees were then in full bloom and Nagrebcen was suffused with their pink blossoms that rival the famous cherry blossoms of Japan. We swam the river and explored it on a raft. Peping took all the pictures.

We devoted several spreads of This Week to Arguilla country. Peping's beautiful photographs were captioned with quotations from Arguilla's stories.

Much, much later, we were planning a similar story on NVM Gonzalez's *kaingin* country in Mindoro, with NVM himself coming with us to show us the scenes in his stories, but death overtook him before we could do it.

I was planning another trip with Peping to the Batanes islands which, at that time in the mid-1950s was like the end of the world, when, on the very day we were set to leave, he was taken ill. I tried to get a substitute photographer but no one wanted to go to a god-forsaken place called Batanes. So I borrowed a camera and went alone.

At that time, there was only one plane flight a week to that northernmost islands of the Philippines. On the day that the plane that was

### As I See It



Neal H. Cruz

to take me back to civilization was due to arrive, the sky was overcast. We could hear the plane circling overhead but obviously the pilot could not see the Basco runway so he flew back to the mainland. That meant I had to wait another week to go home.

When I got back to the Chronicle, I gave my films to Peping to process. When he saw the photographs, he could not stop regretting that he was unable to go with me. "Never mind, we'll go together next time," I told Peping.

But that next time with Peping never came. When I went again to Batanes, much later, it was with Jun de Leon and it was for a cover story in Weekend Magazine of the Daily Express. Peping later became the chief photographer of the Express.

Even when we were working for different newspapers, Peping and I never lost touch. We had lunch together at the regular Monday lunches of Plaridel. One week after a lunch at Plaridel, I received a phone call. It was Peping's daughter. Peping had collapsed at home and died in the hospital.

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Adrian Cristobal I knew perhaps longer than his wife did. I first met him when I was a student of NVM Gonzalez. NVM taught writing at three universities: the University of Santo Tomas, University of the Philippines, and Philippine Women's University. He regularly invited his best students to night discussions at his home, first in Singalong, then at the UP campus. That was how the student writers of the three universities came to know each other and became friends. Though Adrian never graduated from UP he hung around with the UP writers

and became a member of the Ravens, and that was how I came to know him.

Years later, when I was managing editor of The Evening News, one of my reporters told me about Adrian. He was jobless and could I get him into the Evening News? At that time, our newspaper was in the middle of a campaign to amend the RP-US bases pact. I knew Adrian was a good writer, so I took him in as an editorial writer. Because of the Evening News' campaign, the bases pact was renegotiated and a better treaty signed, for which reason the newspaper won journalism awards. Adrian won the award for best editorial writing.

That gave Adrian a revitalized career in journalism, and he never tired repeating that it was because I hired him in The Evening News. The rest is history. Adrian rose to become a publisher and columnist of several publications.

One week before he died, we visited him at the Makati Medical Center. A long-time heavy smoker, he was diagnosed with lung cancer. His kidneys and liver were also failing. He was due to undergo dialysis to assist his failing kidneys. When he saw me, he called me to his bedside. He asked me about dialysis: Is it painful? How often?

"Dialysis is no big deal," I told him. "It does what your kidneys can no longer do—cleanse your blood. It does in four hours what the kidneys do in 48. You have to undergo dialysis three times a week. After each dialysis, you feel normal and you can do your thing."

"Is it painful?" he asked again.

"Yes, it's painful, but only for a few seconds. It's like a virgin being deflowered," I joked. "It is painful while the needles are being inserted into you, but once they're in, you don't feel anything anymore."

Adrian laughed. He still had his sense of humor.

He was due to be dialyzed for the first time the next day and I think he dreaded it. But after our conversation, his fears vanished.

It didn't save him, however. A week later, Adrian was dead.

## Adrian Cristobal, writer

### THERE'S THE RUB



Conrado de Quiros

by." It was about 10 p.m., most of his visitors (he had quite a crowd that day, mostly writers) had been there earlier but had already gone. When he learned I was going to London, he asked me to get him a Times Literary Supplement diary/calendar to jot his notes down on. He was old-school, surrounding himself with literary accoutrements, the pen-and-ink-type tools of writing. He had the delicate palate to go with the robust appetite.

I remembered that one of the Ravens (I don't recall now if it was Pick Aprieto) asked him once why he liked to scowl in public when he laughed all the time in private, particularly in the company of friends with the aid of libation. Adrian replied, laughing, that the only way you could be taken seriously by the public was if your face was set in a frown. If you smiled a lot, you would be dismissed as frivolous. Especially he said, if you were as good-looking as he.

"A quite cynical person, possibly acquired in the practice of journalism," Elmer Ordofez assessed him in retrospect. I'd disagree with the "cynical." Skeptical maybe, bitingly satirical maybe, slightly disillusioned maybe, but not cynical. I always thought Adrian was far too irreverent, sacrilegious, and mischievous to be cynical. He wore the mask of snobbery but he harbored a heart made of fluff. He was a sucker for a sob story, and all his life had been ripped off by friends and strangers who had a talent for telling it.

Adrian believed in one thing fervently, and that was writing.

The last time I saw him was exactly one month before he died last Saturday, a couple of days before I left for abroad. His daughter, Celin, had told me that Makati Med had pronounced that he had stage-four lung cancer, and I knew it was as ironclad a death sentence as could be slapped on anyone, to go by friends who had gone away that way.

I was surprised to see him in good shape and in reasonably good spirits in his hospital bed. He put down a book he was reading and greeted me, "Buti napasyal ka (Good of you to drop

in on me these days), he was sly, preferring to point out national foibles with wit and subtlety. Alas, the wit and subtlety were often lost not just on the public but on their victim. I remember once that he offered faint praise to someone (whose identity is best left secret, this is Christmas after all) in a column and ended up being thanked profusely by the fellow.

Years ago, Adrian wrote a book on his other favorite Filipino, Andres Bonifacio, called "The Tragedy of the Revolution," where he talked about the brilliance of the Katipunan having been founded by a plebeian and the benightedness of a society that was unprepared for it. That society included the revolutionaries who thought they were best led by someone with social distinction, like Emilio Aguinaldo. Adrian might have written his own epitaph there, though in a rather oblique way.

His own tragedy wasn't that society was unprepared for him, it was that society had lost interest in people like him. In people like Franz Arcellana, Nick Joaquin, Wilfrido Nolledo, Doreen Fernandez, all of whom died in one fell swoop some years ago without grinding this world to a halt. Like Icarus falling into the sea in Breughel's painting, to a world oblivious to it. Adrian was one of the last of a dying breed, a breed of people who loved writing and writers and wanted the world to do so, too. Alas, increasingly vainly: It's all the country can do now to love reading, let alone writing; it's all this country can do now to love people who think, let alone people who write.

I don't know that Adrian ever became cynical or bitter over it. My last look at him in that hospital bed suggests he never despaired at the thought. And I do recall that one of his favorite jokes was something a writer friend of his did during their youth. The fellow told the girl of his dreams, "I love you," and was promptly rejected. Unfazed, the guy said: "Who cares whether you love me or not? I'm just telling you I love you."

Maybe Adrian said that too, laughingly, before he went.

He was sairical in the way that Rizal was satirical, because it suited his temperament best, because he belonged to the same tradition, when letters and learning and sophistication meant the world to the world. It's this time of year that you miss him most because he was never one to pass up Rizal Day, having himself spoken many times at the celebrations in the Shrine. He wasn't shrill (which unfortunately

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## OPINION

## Mangy, stinking, bathless shepherds

SHOCKING AS IT MAY BE TO OUR IMAGES OF the well-scrubbed shepherd boy with a lamb in his arms before the manger of the Lord, the shepherds of Jesus' time were a despised lot. True, they can be seen as representing the great ancestors of the Jewish people: Abraham and Isaac and Moses and David, all of whom were shepherds. But by the time of Christ, shepherds, living as they did out in the fields without water to perform the ritual ablutions of the Jews, were seen as outside the law. Thus a scripture scholar writes that "Mangy, stinking, bathless shepherds are in their ritual uncleanness an encouragement for all who lack religious status."

Yet they were the very first to be called to worship the newborn King. Here we see a hint of what is to come in the Lord's public life when He ate with publicans and "sinners" and announced, "I have not come to call the self-righteous but sinners to repentance."

Thus, I thrill on Christmas Eve at the Panuluan as enacted by the young people in one of our chapels at Payatas: Joseph and Mary, the latter heavy with child, making their way painfully along the road asking for a room for the night, then entering the chapel, Mary stooping down behind the altar and then standing up with the Babe in her arms, carrying it to the belen as dancers whirl and the chapel rings with songs of joy to the Lord.

I thrill just as much to what takes place on Christmas Day, when these same young people sneak into the garbage dump in the morning, bringing invitations for a Christmas party at the chapel to 100 scavengers who are so poor that they must work even on Christmas. In the afternoon, they are given a meal at the chapel, food-stuff to be taken home to their families, a talk on the meaning of Christmas, and a chance to share their own fears in small groups. It ends with the

THE FEASTING ISN'T OVER YET, EVEN IF, BY the time you read this, you might be suffering from indigestion or a hangover and might be hankering for simple fare like *ginisang munggo* (with broth flavored with ham bone) or even *tyo*.

But this is also still the time to be gifting people, and as a gift to readers out there, my family and I have decided share another listing of food finds that they might want to stuff into their Christmas stocking, or input into their digital organizer for quick reference when the need arises.

First, the holiday staples. The fruitcake has become a joke, with some maintaining that there is really only one fruitcake in the world—it just gets recycled year after year. Well, not if it's the "Fruitcake Filipino." I first tasted it, would you believe, more than 20 years ago when somebody gave one to Millet Mananquil of the Philippine Star, when I was still working there. I've never forgotten that one slice, but unfortunately, Millet couldn't remember where it had come from. Then some weeks ago, I stumbled upon an article about it in Food Magazine, and found out that the fruitcake was an authentic original Filipino "invention" (Millet must have received one of the first finished products) of the Rita Ritz company, which is famous for its organic teas.

I called up Rita Ritz and ordered fruit cakes for my family and for gifting, and when told that each cost P350, I objected that the article had put the price at P300. "Oh, did you read the magazine article?" asked the clerk who took my order. "We forgot to update the price, but all right, you can have it at the old price." So the folks at Rita Ritz are accommodating, as well as truthful.

When we finally bit into "Fruitcake Filipino," every morsel testified that I had not been wrong about my initial verdict. A friend to whom we gave a fruitcake even texted us, on Christmas Eve, just to report that the fruitcake was terrific! Part of its charm is that you can really taste the fruit slices on top and incorporated into the molasses-soaked batter: langka, pineapple, mangosteen, and even prunes.

The sad news is that I have lost both my copy of

THIS EARLY, I'M PLANNING A POST-CHRISTMAS and post-New Year's Eve party for friends because most of the parties I attended this season were either connected to work and, of course, family. It is always nice to get friends together and share yet another festive meal, as if we have not enjoyed quite a lot this month. One wonders though how simple or elaborate the post-Christmas party should be. If people placed a diet at the top of their list of New Year's resolutions, then I will provide a good excuse to break it.

Five years in a monastery conditioned me to look forward to the numerous feasts in the Church calendar that was an excuse to dispense with the silence that normally accompanied meals. One cannot truly appreciate the joy of dinner conversation unless you have been deprived of it. On a feast day, "special food" was prepared—meaning meat, sugar and carb-loading—particularly welcome after the Holy Week fasting. On the eve of Easter Sunday, after saying grace, the abbot would then exclaim the wonderful words, "Benedicamus domino (Let us bless the Lord)," made even more special with the addition of two "Alleluia," because they are absent from the 40-day Lenten liturgy. To this, the community would reply "Deo gratias (Thanks be to God)," also with a double Alleluia, and that was the signal for talk and laughter. Chatter would mingle with the tinkling of glasses and flatware, and everyone was in good cheer, except a few grouchy souls of which we are blessed everywhere both in and out of a monastery.

Perhaps it is my imagination or the fondness with which I look back to an earlier phase in my complicated life, but during silent meals monks made minimal noise with tableware. The silence could be so stifling that one would be hard-pressed to contain laughter when an audible fart broke the peace. Once it was just the fart-like sound from a near-empty mustard bottle being coaxed to season a bland piece of meat that brought the house down.

"Magnificat," Our Lady's hymn of praise to God Who takes care of the poor.

Many lessons come out of this experience. At the meal served them, some of the scavengers ask for plastic bags in order to take some of their own food home to their families. Last year, there were apples to be handed out; a benefactor insisted on supplying them over the protests of a young Je-suit who thought that apples were too expensive and that the money could better be spent on other foodstuff. But when the apples were handed out, there were broad smiles of appreciation, they symbolized that Christmas has really come, and perhaps also the extravagance of God in giving His Son to us.

There are other stories as well. The regular church-goers in the chapels were asked this year each to contribute a can of corned beef or Vienna sausages to go with the pasta meal which would be handed out. On one occasion, a young boy came up after Mass and said, "A can of corned beef? We don't have enough money for rice." But his sister chimed in, "Never mind, we will give the can of corned beef." A woman came up with some coins, saying that she and her companions did not have the money to buy a can each, but they had pooled what money they had, to make their contribution. And some of the cans of beef or sausage came gift-wrapped! Another reflection perhaps of the extravagance of God.

Then there is the prayer group of mothers, also in Payatas, who put on a Christmas party for their

children, while permitting each child to invite a friend. Many invited children of scavengers or even scavenger-children, dirty and unwashed, to join with them.

The sad part of it is that this generosity and good will, perhaps for lack of organized outlets, may well be dissipated after Christmas as the scavengers go back to the dump and others go about their business. Even sadder is the fact that the structures which force people to work the dump even on Christmas Day—the land-owning system and legal system generally as well as government priorities, policy and practice—remain firmly in the control of the elite. Christ in His public life was not content with eating with publicans and sinners; He attacked the religious structures which oppressed the people, and this ultimately led to His death. And He taught a set of values which would undermine the oppressive economic and political structures.

The challenge of Christmas is not only to provide immediate assistance to those in need, but to bring it about that they will no longer be in need. In this context, the case of the Sumilao farmers is doubly instructive. First, the history shows how the law can be used to advance the interests of the wealthy at the expense of the poor. The law then must be reformed, including the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law. Secondly, it shows that there are deep reservoirs of potential support, among the middle class, Church groups and others, for those willing to stand up and sacrifice for justice.

My New Year's wish then for Philippine society is that support for the Sumilao farmers will not dry up now that they are home, and that the values of compassion, sharing and justice, so evident in recent weeks, will take organized form and make it unnecessary for anyone to work the garbage dump next Christmas.

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

the magazine and the address of Rita Ritz in Project 6. But if you e-mail me a week from now, I might have the data available for you!

SOME months ago, restless after his early retirement, the hubby decided to give full bent to his culinary inclinations and decided to take lessons offered at Amici, that incredible restaurant in Don Bosco Makati that we discovered while keeping vigil over an ailing brother at Makati Med.

Pie's culinary instructor at Amici was Chef Giorgio, who had consulted with various Italian restaurants in town and taught Italian cooking on the side. For eight Saturdays, Pie took lessons in pizza-making, pasta preparation and bread-making along with housewives, budding chefs and even a pair of luxury liner cooks whose Italian boss wanted them to master Italian cuisine. Pie has since put the lessons to good use these days as pizza, pasta and focaccia have become his standard repertoire at our Tagaytay weekend home.

Unfortunately, shortly after the lessons ended, Giorgio left Amici when the Don Bosco fathers decided to sell it. Then just this month, Pie discovered that he had set up his own restaurant, called Volare, at the Gateway Mall in Cubao. We went there for Pie's birthday dinner and feasted on crisp, crunchy pizza and huge platters of pasta. The sight of two tables occupied by Italian diners only boosted our confidence that we had chosen our restaurant well.

One note of caution: I was wondering if the restaurant would be playing that Italian classic "Volare" and discovered that it played

BECAUSE we've been spending so many weekends in Tagaytay and nearby Alfonso, where "Inaron Abong" (Pangasinense for "Beloved Home"), our weekend residence, is located, we've become somehow "connoisseurs" of the eateries in the area.

We've long been regulars of Sonya's, both of the garden restaurant and the bed-and-breakfast, but these days, Sonya Garcia, our friend who's largely responsible for making Tagaytay such a trendy destination, has decided to expand her menu. For weddings, she says, couples can now choose either her standard menu of salad, bread and dips, and pasta (supplemented by roast chicken or poached salmon), or her "Filipino" menu developed by her band of chefs. In her "panaderia," lorded over by her former driver-turned-chief baker, Sonya also offers rich, moist chocolate cake, yummy cheese *hopia* (her best seller, she says), crisp, buttery Oh...tap (her wording), pinwheel cookies and even excellent home-made peanut butter.

Some years back, I wrote about Buon Giorni, the restaurant owned by our good friends Linda and Mark Floro, at the Cliff House complex. So successful has it become, that Buon Giorni! is soon to open a branch in Manila, at the Pure Gold building along Shaw Boulevard in Mandaluyong. One morning some months back, Pie and I decided to drop by Giorno for breakfast before making our way to Inaron Abong. We seated ourselves on the opium bed tucked in a corner of the balcony, the site of many wedding proposals, we were told, and while fog slowly crept up the ridge and threatened to envelop us, we feasted on eggs benedict, pancakes and fruit slushes, washed down with hot coffee and tea. It was a morning for relaxing and basking in the chilly air, and revelling in our decision to locate, at least part-time, in this mountain enclave.

After the feast

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R Ocampo

Anyway, the day after a feast, the community would be quiet again and I would watch the abbot eat a very lean meal, sometimes just soup and bread, or a fish dish. When I gave him a knowing look, he would say, "Post-festum (after the feast)." Fish it was for him, but *paksiw na lechon* and leftovers it was for me in a vain attempt to stretch the feast.

Post-festum it will be in the first part of January 2008, but the food will not be simple because we have to deal with all the hampers and baskets under the Christmas tree. Thus, I invited friends over for a Christmas left-over party. The only dish cooked specially for the occasion will be sour sinigang to foil the sweets. We will have fruit and green leafy vegetables to balance out the cholesterol from processed meats, sausages and cheeses. I'm looking forward to slicing a very large, dark and rather obscene *chorizo de Pampanga* that came from my annual supplier of *jamón Serrano*. The regular supplier of cheese apologized because there was little or no *Manchego* to be found this year, so he replaced it with Japanese persimmons and the sweetest of Korean pears. There were little or no *Chistorras de Navarra* to be had this year, so it will be replaced by *Ilocos Norte longanisa*, not the small plump ones from Ilocos Sur, nor the short shriveled ones from Guagua, Pampanga, or Lucban, Quezon. This Ilocos Norte type is truly "long-anisa," because it is one lengthy sausage with no partitions. Sometimes called "never-ending," it comes in a bag by the kilo coiled like a snake, or if you have a more

earthy imagination, it resembles the twisting monster found at the bottom of the toilet bowl post-festum.

There was a lot of bread received this year freshly baked loaves with raisins or sweet meats dusted with pastry sugar to simulate frost and snow. We received the familiar unmarked white cardboard box that contains individually wrapped, *queso de bola* enriched *ensaimada* from the now famous Cunanan kitchen. More traditional *ensaimadas* from Pampanga come with a distinct flavor because these are baked in stone ovens and made with lard.

The closest you can get to traditional *ensaimada* in Manila would be at Hizon's in Ermita, which is unmatched by anything mass-produced by Red Ribbon or Goldilocks. National Artist for Literature R. Sison Jose often treats guests to Hizon's a.k.a Za's Café, and uses these *ensaimadas* to describe what is not so good in Filipino culture. Using a fork or spoon, he would push an *ensaimada* down to the plate, to make a point that some people are just that, made of fluff. Dolphy is a regular Hizon's customer but even with his fortune, he half-complains that the price is steep. During Christmas, you can order a giant *ensaimada* from Hizon's the size of a new-born *carabao*'s head. It's actually an overgrown *ensaimada* trying hard to impersonate a fancy cake.

Finally, what Christmas left-over party will be complete without fruitcake? I only received two this year (one I had to beg for, because it is truly the best fruitcake in the universe). I once wrote about the miraculous multiplication of the fruitcake. There are actually only half a dozen fruitcakes in the world, endlessly recycled so that their number appears to be in the thousands. Well, one fruitcake won't be shared or recycled this year, and that makes only five recyclables for 2008. I will have my cake and eat it, too.

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nothing but the song—in all its possible variations—on its sound system. A real danger is leaving the restaurant with LSS or "last song syndrome," with "Volare" impossible to extricate from your brain for the next few hours.

...

WECAUSE we've been spending so many weekends in Tagaytay and nearby Alfonso, where "Inaron Abong" (Pangasinense for "Beloved Home"), our weekend residence, is located, we've become somehow "connoisseurs" of the eateries in the area.

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## A gift to the world

THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY VOTED overwhelmingly last week in favor of a resolution calling for a global moratorium on the use of the death penalty.

The Philippines played an important role in that resolution, yet that news didn't seem to have made it into local media. I learned about it through the Internet edition of the National Catholic Reporter (NCR), an American weekly paper.

NCR had reason to

feature the resolution,

which was co-

authored by 10 coun-

tries: Albania, Ango-

la, Brazil, Croatia,

Gabon, Mexico, New

Zealand, the Philip-

pines, Portugal and

East Timor. Colum-

bus John Allen noted that eight of these countries have Catholic

majorities. He didn't name them, but I thought it'd be useful if I

took a bit of detour and identified the two countries without

Catholic majorities: Croatia and New Zealand.

Allen's column focused on the Catholic influence behind the moratorium. Italy, although not a co-author of the resolution, has been a staunch anti-death penalty and played a

## The nation's real problem

WHAT CONRADO DE QUIROS NOTED IN his column "Dysfunctional" (INQUIRER, 12/17/07) is the mind-boggling spectacle not just of a government that has attained unprecedented levels of evil, but also a citizenry that is oblivious to corrupt practices because political, religious leaders and the media blame others for faults that they do not squeeze out of their own systems.

De Quiros is right to say that it's not just this government that is dysfunctional, this whole country is, that is why if any change

is to be genuinely achieved, then we as a people must change our attitudes and accept personal responsibility for corruption.

This means not giving in to extortion even if it means waiting in long lines. This means not cheating in personal tax obligations. This means obeying traffic rules even when everybody is violating them. This means not patronizing gambling in any form because it destroys our value system. This means a whole lot of self-sacrifice for the sake of righteousness. This means a kind of moral and spiritual re-

newal that can be achieved by a summation of personal decisions to do what is right.

Yes, we are a dysfunctional nation because we cannot go beyond the superficial cause of our national problem. The moment we realize that we ourselves are to blame, then we can go ahead with our lives as a better nation because we'll have no alternative but to mend our ways.

—GUS COSTO,  
guscusio@yahoo.com

## Revolution from within will make People Power unnecessary

IT'S CLEAR AS THE BLUE SKIES ABOVE that, at this age and time, People Power revolt has died a natural death, that it is now a thing of the past, that the Filipino is either sick and tired of it or just too old for it.

Bringing down an establishment, or a government for that matter, will need new tactics, the kind that suits the lifestyle and mind-set of today's generation.

The call to topple the government must

touch and move all classes of people. That call must be—or at least sound—heroic, original and full of substance. It should excite the intellect and inspire spontaneous action. Spontaneity is the element and the prime mover of People Power.

Catch phrases like "moral obligation," "Gloria resign," even if whipped out with a show of guns and bullets, are stale and worn-out. Worse, if the marchers are paid

or still to be paid. But far more loathsome to the public is the sight of property destroyed, like what happened at the Peninsula.

We are a peace-loving people. It goes without saying that our country needs reforms and changes. The people in government and all of us should heed the call of conscience for a revolution from within.

—LOURDES OBEN SANTOS,  
lobenzan@yahoo.com

## Cruz had economy's real problems wrong

NEAL CRUZ IS TAKING A LOT OF THINGS for granted, but I agree that the Philippine economy and the peso aren't as strong as President Macapagal-Arroyo would like the public to believe.

Cruz wrote (INQUIRER, 12/12/07): "Prices were much lower during the administrations of Presidents Ferdinand Marcos, Corazon Aquino, Joseph Estrada—even that of Fidel Ramos. And I don't mean only the oil that we import but also the rice, vegetables and fruits that we grow and the fish that we catch. In fact, home-grown agricultural products and domestic fish are more expensive than imported ones. Which means the Arroyo administration cannot even sustain our agricultural output."

The price of oil affects everything. Doesn't Cruz think oil affects the cost of making chemical fertilizers, transporting of fertilizers and food, running mills, living, etc.? I could go on and on. But the point is, oil is used almost in all economic activities and its effect is felt not just in the pump.

Cruz said: "If Ms Arroyo learned anything in the school of economics, it should have been that in a nation with a healthy economy, everybody would be prosperous, there would be no poor people."

No sane economist would make such a promise! Ask Cielito Habito. There will always be some unemployed and poor people. The economy is a dynamic thing and jobs can become obsolete overnight with the creation of new jobs. In addition, look up the economic theory of Non-Accelerating Inflation Rate of Unemployment which states that full employment cannot be achieved without hyperinflation. Communists are the only people who will promise such a thing and, so far, their kind has failed to accomplish even half the living standards of a capitalist economy.

Before Cruz criticizes Ms Arroyo for being a bad economist, he should first study economics. Then he would realize that Ms Arroyo isn't practicing many of the things she learned from her study of economics. For example, 99 percent of economists are for free trade. But she cannot fully pursue it—unilaterally or multilaterally—because of politics and because it is unpopular. There are many other examples, and Cruz's ranting does not help us focus on the real problems of the economy.

—MARK BELO,  
36 Bonifacio St., Ayala Heights,  
Diliman, Quezon City

## Good guys in jail, bad guys in office

REBELS ARE MADE, NOT BORN. THEY ARE shaped by injustice and oppression, and the final cut is dealt by the denial of their appeal for justice. This is made clear by the American Declaration of Independence which explains why a nation decided to rebel against its government. The Declaration begins with the affirmation that "All men are created equal... endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

It avowed that "Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes, and accordingly all experience hath shewn (sic) that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security."

The signers of the Declaration asserted that "In every stage of these Oppressions, We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people."

Navy Lt. Antonio Trillanes IV and Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim graduated from the Philippine Military Academy, an honored institution where the ideals of patriotism and conduct becoming an officer and a gentleman are drilled into its students. In particular, Trillanes and his Oakwood comrades followed the path undertaken by the signers of the Declaration by first petitioning for provisions that the soldiers in the battlefields of Mindanao badly needed, among them, good shoes, adequate food rations and quick medical aid in case of injuries. They also exposed and petitioned an end to bombings allegedly perpetrated by military agents.

When their complaint was ignored, they went straight to their commander in chief and there met a stinging rebuff. To whom else would they go, except straight to the sovereign people? Trillanes could have taken the easy path, closed his eyes to the neglect and abuses of the government, and wormed his way up to the top to be rewarded with mansions and high positions. Instead he chose the path that the signers of the Declaration took. His election to the Senate showed that a great number of his fellow citizens did not disapprove of his action.

Now Trillanes and his like-minded comrades are in prison. The good guys are in jail, and the bad guys (in the minds of many) are in office. Former Vice President Teofisto Gungo, a tested fighter against despotism and corruption, and former UP president Francisco Nemenzo, also an uncompromising fighter for justice, are under indictment. What lessons do these teach the young?

—MANUEL R. ALMARIO,  
malmario@yahoo.com

## Eddie Ilarde pushed first for 'Maharlika'

READER JIMMY SEMBRANO ERRED WHEN he said in his letter (INQUIRER, 11/29/07) that it was former First Lady Imelda Marcos who suggested that our country's name be changed to "Maharlika."

For the record, it was former congressman/senator Eddie Ilarde who made that suggestion.

—PAUL R. MORTEL,  
MBLA Court, Malanday,  
Marikina City 1805

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# Across the NATION

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# AFP vows to paralyze NPA in Samar

## CPP salutes NPA raiders

LUCENA CITY—THE COMMUNIST Party of the Philippines (CPP) congratulated Monday the New People's Army (NPA) rebels for their successful raid on the Hinabangan Municipal Police Office in Samar province Sunday.

"This tactical offensive shows the determination and capability of the revolutionary forces to defeat the Arroyo regime's counter-revolutionary war of terror and push forward the people's war," CPP spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal said in a statement sent to the INQUIRER.

He claimed that the successful raid added flavor to the people and their revolutionary forces' celebration of the 39th anniversary of the CPP which falls today.

Rosal said the communist raiders easily overpowered the policemen on guard and overran the station.

Citing initial reports from the rebel forces who conducted the raid, he said the raiders seized one M-16 and one M-14 rifles, hundreds of rounds of ammunition and other weapons.

Rosal said a militiaman was also killed in the firefight.

He identified the man as Pedro Abadiano, who was at

the station visiting his police-man-son when the guerrillas struck.

The casualty was reportedly a former member of the Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit.

A report said the communist rebels stalled the arrival of government reinforcements by setting up a blocking force and planting land mines on a route leading to the Hinabangan town hall, where the police office was located.

### Braggadocio

The rebels, reportedly led by a "Ka Batig" and "Ka Homer," fled on foot after the attack.

Rosal said the Hinabangan raid "exposes as nothing but braggadocio" the AFP's (Armed Forces of the Philippines) claim of wiping out the NPA in Eastern Visayas this year."

On Sunday, the CPP-NPA declared a unilateral ceasefire on Dec. 24-25 and on Dec. 31-Jan. 1.

However, Rosal made it clear the order to intensify tactical offensives against government forces remained in force during the four-day ceasefire. *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon*

## ROUNDUP

### Cagayan town councilor shot dead

TUGUEGARAO CITY—A councilor in the coastal town of Bugaay in Cagayan was shot dead in front of the Catholic church in the town after attending Mass on Christmas Eve, police said.

Cagayan police director Senior Supt. Jude Wilson Santos said Councilor Vicman Mondejar was walking toward his van parked in front of the church at 11:30 p.m. when a man approached and shot him in the head.

Santos said Mondejar's wife and three children were with him during the attack but they were not hurt.

He said the police were looking at politics as a possible motive in the slaying of Mondejar, who placed eighth in the council election in the town on May 14. *Villamor Visaya Jr., Inquirer Northern Luzon*

### Girl killed by stray bullet

CEBU CITY—A 16-year-old girl in Mandaue City was hit by stray bullet on Christmas Eve, while 16 persons, most of them residents of Cebu, were injured from firecracker blasts.

Shaony Ann Marianito of Loco, Mandaue City was walking towards her home when she suddenly fell to the ground at 9:30 p.m. on Monday

PO2 Gladstone Riconalla of the Mandaue City Police Office said the police had yet to determine what kind of bullet hit Marianito's left cheek. She was brought to the Mandaue City District Hospital but later transferred to Don Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center (DVSMMC). Hospital spokesperson Nonoy Mongaya said Marianito was still under observation at the emergency room of DVSMMC.

The Regional Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit (RESU) has recorded 16 victims of firecracker blasts, according to RESU personnel Noel Gayo, much very much lower than last year's figure. *Joey A. Gabella, Carla P. Gomez and Jhunnes Napallacan, Inquirer Visayas*

### Marijuana plants uprooted

CAMP DANGWA, Benguet—Police on Monday uprooted more than 16,000 marijuana plants, worth at least P3.24 million, in plantations in Kapangan town.

Reports from the Cordillera police said policemen and agents of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency raided the plantations in Sitio Alawin and Sitio Tayakpa in Barangay Sagubo at 8 a.m.

No suspect or plantation caretaker was arrested during the raid. *Inquirer Northern Luzon*

### 2 suspected rebels slain

COTABATO CITY—Two suspected communist guerrillas were killed on the day the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) rejected the 22-day holiday truce offered by the government.

Sept. Teng Tocao, Sultan Kudarat provincial police director, said a militiaman was also wounded in the 30-minute firefight between militiamen and New People's Army (NPA) rebels in Columbo town on Dec. 17.

Tocao said the militiamen were conducting foot patrol when they chanced upon the undetermined number of rebels near the boundary with Tumauini, North Cotabato around 5 p.m.

Tocao said the rebels left behind their two dead comrades and two weapons as they fled towards the forested portion of Oavao del Sur. *Edwin O. Fernandez, Inquirer Mindanao*

### 2 dead, 3 hurt in road mishap

LUCENA CITY—Two persons died and three others injured when an Asian Utility Vehicle (AUV)-type jeep collided with a bus traveling along Quirino Highway in Tagkawayan, Quezon Monday afternoon.

Insp. Geminiano Dafes, Tagkawayan Municipal Police Office chief, identified the victims as Erwin Ramos, 27, driver of the AUV vehicle, and Erlinda Realino, 54, both residents of Taytay, Rizal.

A report said that at about 4 p.m., a PP Bus Line driven by one Reynaldo Paña was traveling in Barangay San Francisco when it collided head-on with the approaching AUV.

The victims died on the spot. Two other passengers of the AUV vehicle suffered serious injuries and were rushed to the nearest hospital where they were still recuperating. *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon*

By Jhunnes Napallacan  
*Inquirer Visayas*

CEBU CITY—THE ARMED FORCES OF the Philippines Central Command (Centcom) has vowed to launch early next year an offensive against the New People's Army following a raid that the rebel group conducted on a police station in Samar on Sunday.

About a hundred alleged members of the NPA attacked the police station at the town hall in Hinabangan about 5 a.m. Sunday. A civilian died during the exchange of gunfire that lasted for about an hour.

Centcom spokesperson Lt. Col. Jefferson Omandan said the military would concentrate its operations in Samar by January.

"They are taking advantage of the Christmas holidays. But we could not afford to just let the incident pass. Punitive patrols would go on, and whenever they are there, it may spark an encounter," Omandan said.

Omandan admitted that Samar is the one province in the Visayas where the NPA remains a big problem.

He said the military would focus on paralyzing the NPA operations there.

Omandan said Centcom commanding general Victor Ibrado yesterday issued orders to all the military headquarters in the Visayas to be vigilant.

Omandan said the NPA usually conduct operations during the NPA's founding anniversary on Dec. 26.

The guerrilla group would take advantage of the ongoing suspension of military operations, he pointed out.

Omandan said military or police headquarters, which are lax on security, would be the most likely targets.

Central Visayas police director Chief Supt. Ronald Roderos also issued a memorandum to all city and provincial directors in the region to strengthen their security and to establish an advance command post to provide early warning for any NPA attack.

Roderos said intelligence gathering should also be strengthened to avoid similar incidents from happening.

The PRO 7 police force is on heightened alert status because of the Christmas holidays.

## Baguio's street kids ask: Is Santa for real?

BAGUIO CITY—STREET CHILDREN HERE spent Christmas Eve trying to sell gift wrappers and gift bags along downtown Baguio.

On Christmas morning, they tried to sell their remaining pieces to Santa Claus himself since the 1970s.

"Santa" is former Councilor Narciso Padilla, who has spent Christmas mornings giving out candies along downtown Baguio since the 1970s.

He gently reminded the children he attracted—many of them children of Maranao folk who migrated to Baguio—that gifts have already been opened on Christmas Day, so no one will buy their products.

But it led a Maranao child into asking: "Is Santa for real?"

Padilla ended up explaining Santa Claus' role in the Christmas celebration as other Muslim children began to crowd around him.

Their presence there was a sign that Christmas, while a Christian tradition, does belong to all children, Padilla later told the INQUIRER.

It was the first time he engaged Muslims in a discussion about the legend of Santa Claus or Saint Nicholas.

### Muslim children

Some Muslim families here often discourage their children's interest in Santa Claus because of the icon's Christian symbolism, said a Maranao businesswoman.

She points to the website [www.islam-world.net](http://www.islam-world.net) which discusses Santa in a chapter called "The Muslim Survival Guide to Christmas."

It said: "Santa Claus (a German translation of St. Nicholas) was modeled after [St. Nicholas, bishop of Myra 17,000 years ago] a man of kindness, generosity and compassion. It was only in the last few hundred years that Santa Claus was associated with the Christian holiday of Christmas that celebrates the birthday of Prophet Jesus."

The Maranao children, however, told Padilla they believed there is a real Santa because everyone believes he exists.

"Isn't Santa real because everyone believes he is real? All the gift wrappers we are selling bear your features," a Maranao boy said.

They said Padilla should buy all of their wrappers as his keepsake.

Padilla laughed at the children's logic.

"There are lots of Santas. There are also



SANTA CLAUS brings toys to children at the Baguio General Hospital, which is taking care of 66 ill children.

Santas in other countries. I am the Santa of [Baguio]," he said.

The Maranao children did not leave Padilla's side as he walked along Session Road to meet families leaving the Baguio cathedral after attending Christmas Mass.

"It's hard not to see the relevance of this occasion. If Muslims are [enchanted] by Santa, then the concept of charity prevails among the next generation. Santa stands for unity anyway," he said.

Padilla runs the annual "Silahis ng Pasko" project in the city, and the dwindling volume of Yuletide donors suggests that charity is no longer a priority for others, he said.

"I don't blame them. [Earning] money has become hard even for big companies.

Texas Instruments still finances Silahis ng Pasko projects for children [with disabilities], but many of my traditional donors have no more to spare," Padilla said.

Padilla later visited a sales clerk, Josephine Gasat, who gave birth to her "Christmas baby," Jesper Vincent, at the Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center.

He brought stuffed toys and candy to 66 children confined at the hospital.

Some of the children had been crying all night, a nurse said. But they brightened up when Padilla showed up.

"If many people say [playing Santa] is a thankless job, let them come with me to see these children, and they'll know how wonderful it truly is," he said. *Vincent Cabresa, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

## Christmas traditions alive in Pampanga town

By Tonette Orejas  
*Inquirer Central Luzon*

MABALACAT, PAMPANGA—A SEA OF light, bursting brightly from 224 lanterns hoisted on poles, swamped the church grounds here on Christmas Eve as Catholics in 14 of this town's 27 villages kept alive the traditions of the *lubenas* (lantern processions) and the *maatinis* (convergence of *lubenas*).

Like in the dying art of the *pastorella* or Latin hymns that are still sung here during the nine-day Christmas Masses, 72-year-old Paulina Concepcion could not tell the origins of the two practices.

"We grew up witnessing it," Concepcion told the Inquirer as she waited for the arrival of the *lubenas*.

As how it has been done here for decades, she said *lubenas*, a corruption of the word novena, is a procession held in honor of the village's patron saint.

That procession, she said, is incomplete when the *malasanto* (image of saints) is not accompanied by a set of 16 lanterns.

The lanterns are arranged this way: A cross-shaped one heads the set. Behind it are two candle-shaped pieces. Then two rows of star-shaped lanterns, six on each side, accompany the image, which is either on *andas* (shoulder-borne carriage) or on a

*carroza* (wheeled carriage). Behind the carriage is a star shaped lantern that is bigger than the rest.

A choir singing the "Dios te Salve" accompanies the faithful as they go on foot around the community. Its Latin lyrics are prescribed by the parish's liturgy committee.

"The text of the song should be strictly followed ... because the meaning and its essence will be useless," the committee advised in a set of rules it issued for the event.

"It used to be that the lanterns were lighted only by candles or gas lamps," Concepcion said.

### Convergence

After World War II, the lanterns have been lit up either by a car battery or a generator set, she said.

The villages that continue with the practices are Dolores, Cacutud, Atlu-Bola, Mangalit, Sta. Ines, Agus, Sta. Maria, San Francisco, Sta. Maria Homesite, Sto. Rosario, San Joaquin, Mamatitang, Poblacion and Lourdes. These are located around the church compound.

Confined within the villages from Dec. 16 to 23, all the processions converge at the grounds of the Our Lady of Divine Grace Parish at 8 p.m. of Dec. 24.

The *lubenas* then go around the processional route at the town proper.

They all head back to the church an hour later for the Misang Martinez (Christmas midnight Mass), in which a full repertoire of the *pastorella*, which include the "Credo," is sung not by one but three chorales of 50 singers.

Thus the climax is called "maatinis," "mayatinis" or "maatinis." It might have been derived from the word "matin" or dawn prayers.

"Maatinis is the culmination of the nine-day *lubenas*. The two go together," said Robbie Tantingco, a resident of Mabalacat and executive director of the Holy Angel University's Center for Kapampangan Studies.

*Lubenas* and *maatinis* are known to be as done in Magalang, Angeles City, San Fernando and Mexico in Pampanga and in Concepcion, Tarlac.

</div

# SMC'S SUMILAO PROPERTY IS A DEVELOPED AGRO-INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, NOT RAW FARM LAND, OPERATIONAL BY JANUARY 2008



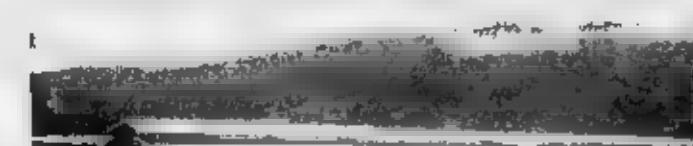
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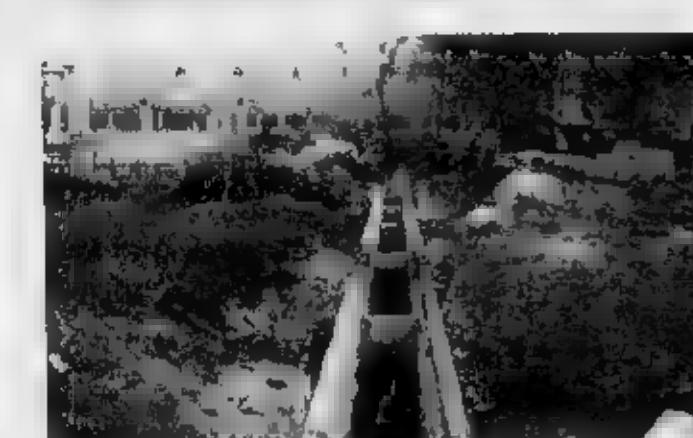
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**San Miguel Foods, Inc.'s (SMFI) P2.4 billion agro-industrial estate will create thousands of jobs not only in Sumilao but the entire Bukidnon Province.**

- The project will generate employment for 2,400 workers and the facility will require 400 employees with an annual payroll of approximately P50 million;
- By partnering with SMFI, the farmers of Bukidnon will have access to farm inputs, financing and technology which will improve farm productivity and guarantee better farm-gate pricing;
- Local government tax revenues will increase 30-fold when the project is fully operational. From P3 million in annual tax collection, SMFI will pay P98 million annually in taxes, allowing government to improve the delivery of education, health, housing and other basic services.

**As the current owners of the Sumilao property, we question the legal standing of the protesting farmers.**

- A number of the farmers are already Agrarian Reform beneficiaries, having received at least 66 hectares of neighboring land. This nullifies their eligibility to lay further claim to the Sumilao property.
- In fact, the Supreme Court in 1998 noted the absence of tenants on the property, which means none of the farmers have any tenancy rights.

Bukidnon has thousands of hectares of idle Government land in the neighboring area that can be distributed to the farmers. Why jeopardize this major rural development project that is very nearly operational and stands to bring immeasurable benefit and progress to the people of Bukidnon?

We trust in the fairness of the public to see the facts for what they are.



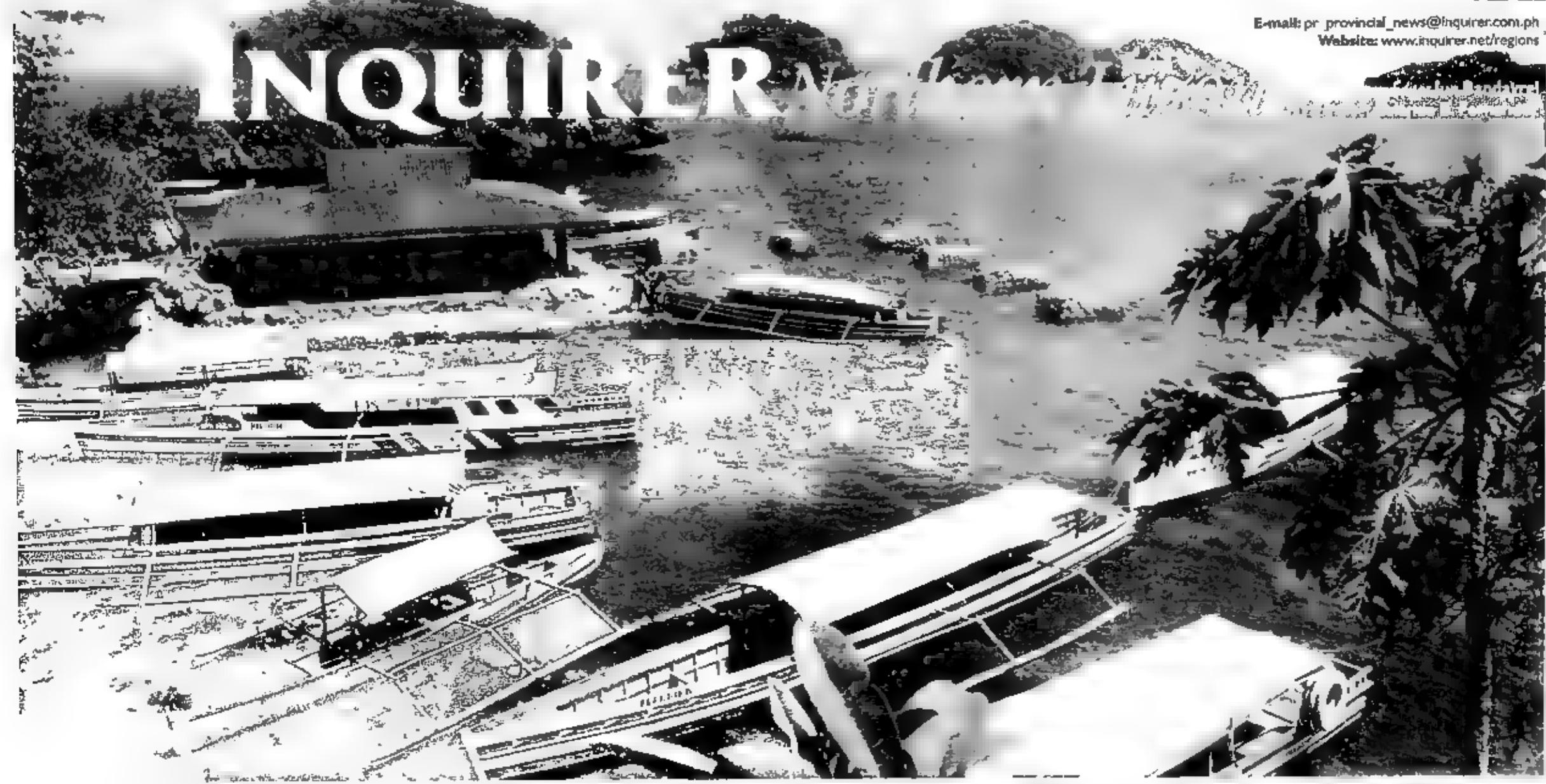
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BOATS await passengers at Quezon Island, one of the most popular destinations at the Hundred Islands National Park in Alaminos City, Pangasinan.

PHOTOS BY RAY ZAMBRANO

## Interconnected Hundred Islands seen

By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes  
Alaminos City

**T**O ATTRACT MORE TOURISTS to the Hundred Islands National Park (HINP), the city government of Alaminos in Pangasinan has decided to embark on an ambitious project to link these islets on the Lingayen Gulf through a network of transparent underwater tubes.

Visitors can walk through these underwater "bridges" to view various species of fish, corals and marine creatures in their natural environment.

The "bridges" are part of the Hundred Islands Underwater Marine Park project that envisions the establishment in the area of fish sanctuaries, snorkeling and diving areas, a facility for water sports, and a marine institute where experts can study the biological diversity of the Lingayen Gulf.

"It is a grandiose plan. But it is a highly feasible [project] and is actually a part of the comprehensive development master plan of the city," says Mayor Hernani Braganza.

The plan, prepared by the Palafox Associates, an internationally recognized firm engaged in architectural design, urban planning and consultancy, involves a development blueprint for Alaminos as a major player in the socioeconomic and tourism growth of Pangasinan and the Ilocos.

"The plans are ready. What we just need are investors," Braganza says.

He admits that the city's plans for the HINP are "big" but the effort and possible investments that would go to it would be worth every sweat and centavo as the park is the country's first national park and the top tourist attraction of Alaminos and Pangasinan.

Even in its "untouched" stage, the park already draws about 100,000 visitors year-



THE WATERS around the Hundred Islands attract snorkelers and divers.

ly, Braganza says.

The park offers tourists white beaches, dive spots, caves and bird sanctuaries.

"A wide variety of fish abounds in the waters. They have multiplied fast after we put a stop to illegal fishing activities there," Braganza says.

The coral beds, strained from destructive fishing, are recovering, too. The University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute maintains a giant clam (*Tridacna gigas*, locally known as *taklobo*) farm in the area. This also serves as nesting ground for various species of fish.

The city cannot actually introduce heavy development in the islands because under the National Integrated Protected Areas (Nipas) Act, the city has to protect and conserve this natural spot, says Roel Afionuevo, city planning officer.

The master plan groups the islands into three categories: The "exclusive islands," intended for those who want to have privacy and try scuba diving and snorkeling; the "exploration islands," for tourists who are into adventure and extreme sports such as rappelling, parasailing, kayaking and trekking; and the "everyday islands," for families and groups who want to go swimming, snorkel-

ing, trekking, and bird and bat watching.

"The underwater bridges project is the ultimate [goal]. It will justify all the other infrastructure requirements of the area such as the airport, a seaport, a highway, shopping malls and others. It will jumpstart the city's development," Braganza says.

The city's master plan does not revolve only on the HINP, but on the entire city based on its geographical characteristics and investment potentials.

With this, the city would be divided into five clusters, Braganza says.

While development for the Hundred Islands (Cluster 1) is minimal, the proposed development for Cluster 2, which includes the Bolo Beach, is bigger.

The proposed projects there include resort and hotel development, ecotourism, forest hillside development, health and spa, view decks, mangrove forest, golf course and an equestrian village.

The horseshoe shaped Bolo Beach, with its shallow waters, offers a perfect getaway for vacationers and is actually an alternative to the Lucap wharf as a jump-off point to the islands.

The master plan's Cluster 3 is called the "Heritage Walk Zone," which offers a tour of the "Old Town"—the church, town plaza,

ancestral houses, museums, the Balay-a-Daan, salt farms and rivers. Cluster 4 is the "countryside farming zone" while Cluster 5 is the "business park zone."

"The master plan is designed to make Alaminos a 'green city'.. Investors, big and small, are welcome to do business in the city," says Braganza, who sponsored his native town's cityhood bid when he represented Pangasinan's first district in the House of Representatives in 2001.

But he says only light industries, tourist related facilities and those that draw strength from the rich agriculture and fishery resources of the city are welcome.

While tourism is the primary focus of the master plan, its other goals include a fully developed agriculture, adequate and highly modernized physical infrastructure and facilities, availability of modern education, accessible health facilities, well protected and rehabilitated coastal resources and assured public safety and peace and order.

All it takes for Alaminos' master plan to take off is an international airport, Braganza says.

The entire western Pangasinan, which has potential tourism and commercial areas, will benefit once an airport is built there, he adds.

Braganza says while Alaminos is accessible by land transportation, travel time from the different airports like the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Metro Manila), Diosdado Macapagal International Airport (Pampanga) and the San Fernando City Airport (La Union) is "quite long and tiring."

"Who wants to travel for three to six hours by land to get to the islands? With an airport, tourists from other countries can fly direct to the city," he says.

Braganza welcomes President Macapagal-Arroyo's endorsement of a commercial airport project in her State of the Nation Address in July.

"This has been a long dream of Alaminos and Pangasinan that will soon become a reality. It will make the province accessible to businessmen and tourists, and hopefully, it can accommodate cargo planes for Pangasinan to export its agricultural resources," he says.

## Living, working with the Aeta

By Tonette Orejas  
Porac, Pampanga

**T**O CONTINUE LIVING and working with the Aeta in Porac, Pampanga, is the gift Fr. Regnel "Ching" Fuertez is giving to himself this Christmas.

It is in the mountain ranges of Porac and with some 2,000 indigenous people that he has "grown in faith with" in the last two years since May 2004, said the 43-year-old former draftsman whose calling to the priestly vocation came late in life.

"I like it here. It is my third Christmas here. The people teach me that while they live simple lives, they still try to be happy," said Fuertez, the only priest in the Archdiocese of San Fernando who is assigned to the province's Aeta communities.

His mission is based at the Vil-

la Mana reservation (Sino Alalangad to Aeta), about 20 km west of Mt. Pinatubo. The archdiocese's Social Action Center of Pampanga helps him out in nearby Sapang Uwak. (Another Kapampangan priest, Fr. Henry Gieco, works with the Aeta in Bataan's Mt. Malasimbu.)

"They show their faith through work and through family life," he said during a break in the rehearsal of the choir of young Aeta last week.

At the chapel two hours later, the children, accompanied by Fuertez on the guitar, sang their best at the Mass celebrated by Archbishop Paciano Aniceto.

Like in past Christmas Masses, this one was followed by a party that Aniceto has not failed to give in the last 15 years. The community shared lunch of *pusung sagus*, *tortas*, *tilapia*, banana and papaya.

The lanky, perennially smiling priest seemed to have earned the trust of the Aeta who do not



FR. REGNEL "Ching" Fuertez has chosen to live and work with the Aeta.

TONETTE OREJAS

easily befriend strangers. The elders kissed his hand. The young ones sidled up to him, at times hanging on to his legs. Older women gave him baskets of banana and papaya grown in their *gasak* (mountain plots).

And he's keen at what they like. At the end of the Mass, he sang a folk version of "Sometimes When We Touch," a hit in the 1980s. A folk singer in Guagua town gave

that a Kapampangan refrain.

The local version is known around here as "O Jo, Kaluguran da ka (O Jo, I love you)." Playing to a delightful audience, Fuertez earned loud applause.

In preaching, he said he respects their regard for Apo Namalyari, not putting that deity in conflict with Catholic beliefs.

### Calling

How he got here is both by force of circumstance and calling. Msgr. Felipe Pangilinan, 84, and working here for almost 20 years, suffered a stroke and Fuertez had to take over.

Months before that though, he said the "small voice" that had been guiding him in periods of discernment, told him to head for the "mountains."

"So here I was," he said.

Porac, his third assignment after being a university chaplain and parish priest of the barangay island of Malusac in Sasmuan town, was by far re-

garded as a difficult mission.

It was because the Aeta there confronted land and mining issues, lived within ancestral domains where government troops and communist rebels clashed, and dealt with unscrupulous traders.

Like the winding road to Villa Maria, his route to the priesthood was even more complicated.

"I failed twice in the civil engineering board exam although I exerted so much effort to pass it. Then I went to the United States as an immigrant, worked as a draftsman there (from 1988 to 1992). While playing basketball [in California], I suffered a sprain in the leg. That's when I found myself reading the Bible," Fuertez said.

### Sad turns

In all these sad turns, he said "God must have another plan for me."

He decided to return to the Philippines in late 1992, giving up

his green card to the US Embassy.

"I was laughing at myself as I surrendered the green card," he said, thinking himself to be a fool because the queue for visa applicants that day was, as usual, long.

On the suggestion of a classmate who went on to become a priest, he retreated to Guimaras Is. and to discern for the vocation. Getting no signs, he tried to find it by living with a Muslim and Catholic couple in Macabebe, Pampanga.

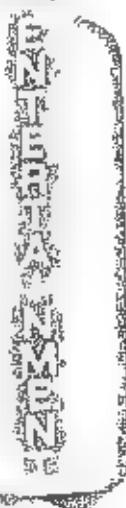
It was while with the Sumascan missionaries in Lubao, Pampanga, that he first heard the "small voice" tell him to embrace priesthood.

At the Holy Apostles Seminary, his batch of 60 aspirants dwindled to 30, then to 18, then to 14 and finally, six. Fuertez was among the few who made it.

Finding the priesthood, remaining faithful to it, staying on with the Aeta and helping in their life's struggles are, he said, "graces of God."



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# Inventor wins suit vs firm

Ayala Land subsidiary told to pay P90M in damages

By Margaux C. Ortiz

A QUEZON CITY JUDGE HAS ORDERED A SUBSIDIARY of real estate developer Ayala Land Inc. to pay an inventor more than P90 million in damages for using his patent for a modular housing system without his consent.

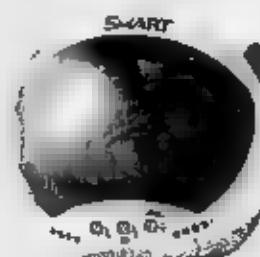
In his decision dated Dec. 18, Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 90 Judge Reynaldo Daway said the acts of Avida Land Corp. were an infringement of Edgardo Vazquez's patent invention.

Vazquez is the president and chief executive officer of Vazquez Building Systems Corp. and former president of the Filipino Inventor's Society.

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The **WORLD**

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

# Thaksin to return home from exile



THAKSIN talks at a press conference in Hong Kong. AP

**HONG KONG—OUSTED PRIME MINISTER** Thaksin Shinawatra said on Tuesday he would return to Thailand from exile after the party he backed emerged from weekend elections front runner to form a coalition government.

Thaksin, his party dissolved after a bloodless 2006 coup and he barred from politics for five years for electoral fraud, told a Hong Kong news conference he wanted to clear himself of the corruption charges brought by military-appointed investigators.

He declared again he would not re-enter politics when he returned "by April at the latest."

But, in a statement likely to upset his many enemies inside and outside the military, Thaksin said he would be happy to advise the People Power

Party his supporters took over after their party was dissolved.

"I will not take any political position," he said after the PPP won 232 of the 480 seats in parliament in Sunday's election and started trying to put a coalition government together.

"That's enough. I am quitting politics," he said, but added: "I will give my ideas free of charge" if the PPP asked for them.

Thaksin called for reconciliation in a country the election proved still deeply divided between the urban middle classes whose mass protests preceded

the coup and the countryside which swept him to two landslide election victories.

"I urge everybody concerned to forget the past and look forward to the bright and prosperous future for Thailand," he said.

However, the precise course Thai politics will take is still far from clear, with most parties saying they are unlikely to reveal their hands until the military appointed Election Commission finalizes the results, expected by Jan. 3.

The commission is also investigating scores of allegations of electoral fraud and there are frequently expressed suspicions that there will be military pressure to disqualify PPP winners and whittle down its numbers.

"A PPP-led coalition would be

a frontal assault on the Establishment, pitting the forces and interests of the majority of the electorate against those of a significant minority that includes Bangkok," political analyst Thitinan Pongsudhirak said.

"Perhaps this is Thailand's inevitable reckoning, a collision course that was bound to arrive on the scene after decades of willful neglect of the majority by the minority," he wrote in the Bangkok Post newspaper.

The PPP won almost 50 percent of the popular vote, mostly in the rural heartlands where Thaksin is regarded as the first Thai leader to pay serious attention to poor country folk through cheap health care and pumping money into the villages.

Bangkok went solidly for the Democrat Party, the main opposition during Thaksin's five years in power, which won 165 seats and is favored by the military and royalist establishment.

Despite the prospects of the political turmoil of the past two years continuing, the Thai stock market rose one percent on re-opening on Tuesday, a day after an election holiday.

Domestic investors believed the results of the weekend's general election would help improve domestic political stability and economic growth, likely to fall from 5.1 percent in 2006 towards 4 percent this year, the lowest rate in six years.

But there were still fears the polarization of the country, which has had 18 coups in 75 years of on-off democracy, could result in more bloodshed and another military intervention.

Reuters

## No letup for Christmas for US troops in Iraq

**BAGHDAD—CHRISTMAS EVE**, late afternoon, and US soldiers from 4th Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Regiment piled into their Stryker armored vehicles for a patrol out on the streets of Baghdad.

This is the fifth Christmas that US troops have been out in Iraq, and commanders say the best way to keep morale up is to keep moving.

There are special dinners, packages from home, religious services and decorations around camp, but no let-up in patrols.

"My personal goal would be to try to go ahead and keep the mission constant," said Ray Ramsey, who has spent 23 years in the Army and his third Christmas in Iraq, looking after about 100 men as the first sergeant of a Stryker troop.

"We want to recognize it, go ahead and acknowledge it and wish everybody a Merry Christmas. But if you make too much of it you give them probably an opportunity to dwell on where they're not and what they're not having right now," he said.

Presents from home keep soldiers' spirits up, he said.

"You get the blues around Christmas time," he said.

Reuters

## Kyrgyzstan is Santa's new home

**BISHKEK—SEEKING A NOVEL** remedy to revive its rickety economy, the tiny ex-Soviet state of Kyrgyzstan has declared itself the new home of Santa Claus.

Citing Swedish engineering firm that determined the ideal spot for Santa's global toy delivery hub, officials in this predominantly Muslim country have quickly moved to capitalize on the finding.

They named a mountain peak after Santa, to join Mounts Lenin, and Yeltsin, and declared 2008 "The Year of Santa Claus." Its slogan will be "Kyrgyzstan is the land of Santa Clauses," said Kyrgyz tourism authority spokesperson Nurkhan Tazibayeva.

In most Western countries Santa Claus, or Father Christmas, is thought to live at the North Pole or in Finland. However, if he were located in Central Asia and started westwards on his traditional Christmas Eve trips, Kyrgyz officials said he



KYRGYZ schoolchildren return home after taking part in 'The Best Santa' contest in the village of Tash-Moinok. Some Swedish experts insist Santa should have his home based somewhere in the mountainous ex-Soviet state because it is the only place from which he can reach on time every home on earth during the short Christmas period.

would have a more efficient delivery route.

"He can eliminate time-consuming detours and avoid subjecting his reindeer to undue strain," engineering consultants

at Stockholm-based Sweco, who used geography and demographics in their research, said in a press release.

A group of professional mountain-climbers will pitch

the country's flag at the newly renamed peak, Kyrgyzstan's tourism authority said, while a world festival of Santas is planned for the capital's main square.

Reuters

## 22 killed in suicide car blast near Iraq residential complex

**BAGHDAD—A SUICIDE CAR** bomb exploded outside a residential complex belonging to a state-run oil company north of Baghdad on Tuesday, killing 22 people and wounding 80, police, local hospital officials and the US military said.

Local authorities said that victims were still being pulled from the rubble of two destroyed buildings and that the death toll was expected to rise.

The bomber, who was driving a pickup truck, detonated his explosives when Iraqi police and members of a volunteer security force prevented him from entering the gate of the compound belonging to the state-run North Oil Compa-

ny in Beiji, about 250 kilometers north of Baghdad, a police officer said. He said some of the residential buildings were damaged in the blast.

Most of the 22 killed were civilians, and at least three were children, the police officer said. The dead also included guards of the oil company and members of the volunteer force.

An official at the main hospital in Beiji gave the same casualty figures and said 50 were wounded.

Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to release information to the media.

The US military said in a statement that 20 people were killed

and 80 wounded. The reason for the discrepancy in casualty figures was not immediately clear.

Authorities imposed a curfew on the city—home to the country's largest refinery—until further notice.

Volunteer forces known as Awakening Councils—groups of Sunni Arab fighters who have turned against al-Qaida and are now funded by the US—have been credited with helping reduce violence in Iraq in recent months.

Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to release information to the media.

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## Somali kidnappers free French journalist



**BOSASSO—SOMALI GUNMEN** released on Monday a French journalist they had kidnapped eight days ago in the northern Puntland region, local officials said.

The French journalist has just been released and is now staying with officials, local elders and some diplomats in the hotel, Puntland trade and industry minister Abdushamad Yusuf Abwan told Reuters.

Witnesses said the kidnappers handed Gwen Le Gouil to French diplomats at a hotel in Bosasso earlier on Monday.

"I'm fine. I'm healthy. I'm only feeling very tired," Le Gouil told a brief news conference in Puntland's main port. "I'm very happy

to be free to go back to France and see my family."

Fisheries Minister Ahmed Saeed Awnur said no ransom had been paid for the Frenchman. The gunmen were reportedly demanding up to \$80,000 for his safe return.

"The journalist was released without condition. Whoever was responsible for the abduction will face the law," he said.

A French diplomat at the press conference, who asked not to be named, thanked the local authorities and told reporters.

"We're leaving Puntland tomorrow because it's Christmas, which is very important," Le Gouil said.

Reuters

## THE DAILY GOSPEL



Wednesday, December 26, 2007

Stephen, 1st Martyr

1st Reading: Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59

Matthew 10:17-22

Jesus said to his disciples, "Be on your guard with respect to people, for they will hand you over to their courts and they will flog you in their synagogues. You will be brought to trial before rulers and kings because of me, and so you may witness to them and the pagans."

"But when you are arrested, do not worry about what you are to say and how you are to say it; when the hour comes, you will be given what you are to say. For it is not you who will speak, but it will be the Spirit of your Father in you."

"Brother will hand over brother to death, and a father his child; children will turn against parents and have them put to death. Everyone will hate you because of me, but whoever stands firm to the end will be saved."

Commentary

The child is born to us. And the child will die with us, for us. And those who are close to him, who follow him, will be born in him and die with him. Stephen is the first to die, proclaiming who this Child truly is—Jesus the Beloved of God, prophet, and crucified one risen from the dead by his Father in the power of the Spirit. Stephen seeks to live as Jesus did, in service to his brothers and sisters, and he dies as Jesus died, praying to God to forgive those who murder him. The dying and rising in Jesus the Son of God has begun.

We have been baptized into the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and we too are called to proclaim the Word of God in Jesus and if necessary to stand and speak the truth of who this child born to us is—the Son of Man, the crucified one, Son of the Father, the fullness of the Spirit. We will be given of the fullness of that Spirit when we stand as the children of God before the world. God became flesh, and so now, it is our flesh that must bear God's Word to the world.

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## WORLD BRIEFS

### Midnight Mass at ground zero

**NEW YORK**—The first midnight Mass at ground zero happened while workers were still clearing away the debris of the fallen twin towers and recovering bodies from the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attack. The last Mass was held Monday night, giving police, firefighters, ground zero workers and Sept. 11 families a final chance to pray on Christmas Eve at the site, where intensifying construction is taking up more and more open space. "It was poignant, it was moving, it was uplifting," the Rev. Brian Jordan said after the service ended early Tuesday.

**Child porn ring probed**  
BERLIN—Prosecutors in the eastern German state of Saxony-Anhalt are investigating 12,000 people on suspicion of possessing illegal images of children, state prosecutor Peter Vogt told German radio on Monday. "They face charges of downloading child pornography," Vogt told MDR radio. Vogt said the probe was launched in the spring and has since traced suspects in 70 different countries. It began the investigation after a tip from a Berlin internet provider.

**4 dead in Pakistan ambush**  
QUETTA—Pakistani rebels ambushed a pickup truck in the remote southwest, killing at least four people and injuring three others, authorities and the militants said on Tuesday.

The vehicle, carrying seven men from the pro-government Maslui Bugti tribe to a local gas field, was attacked with a rocket by a group of masked men near Nilagh, about 350 km east of Quetta, said Nazarmuddin Tareen, the area police chief. The Baluch Liberation Army, a militant group demanding greater rights and increased royalties for gas and minerals claimed responsibility.

**Artillery attack in Sri Lanka**  
COLOMBO—Sri Lankan soldiers killed 13 Tamil Tiger rebels in an artillery attack and gunbattles along the northern front lines,

the military said on Tuesday. Troops stationed in the village of Pokkarawal, in Vavuniya district, came under heavy rebel mortar attacks on Monday. Return fire killed two guerrillas, said a defense ministry official. The attack wounded two soldiers, said the official on condition of anonymity as he was not authorized to speak to the media.

**Indonesia boat accident**  
JAKARTA—Indonesian rescuers searched for seven people still missing on Tuesday after a boat sank in high seas off Sumatra Island, leaving two people dead, police said. Five survivors were found after the accident in the Malacca Strait on Monday, said local police chief Agus Sanjoto.

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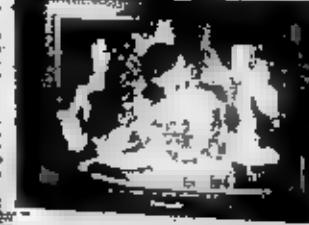
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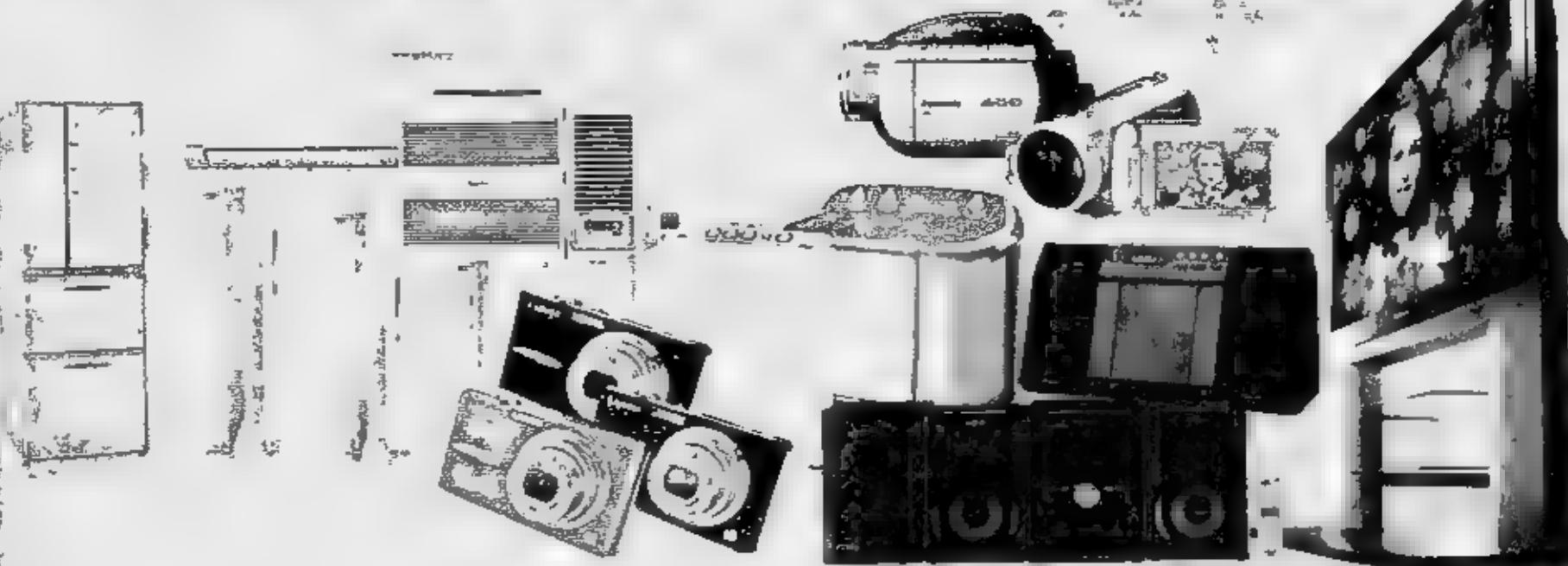
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RED BULL'S Jojo Dundi puts up a shot against two Alaska defenders. ALISTOR DEACUZ

## Alaska crushes Red Bull, Cone surprised

GAMES FRIDAY (Araneta Coliseum)

4:50 p.m.—Sta. Lucia vs Welcom

7:20 p.m.—Magnolia vs Air21

By Musong R. Castillo

### SURPRISES REALLY DO COME on Christmas Day—and they're not just for kids.

Alaska and Barangay Ginebra got a pleasant dose of surprise yesterday, hammering out wins hardly expected of them in the Smart-PBA Philippine Cup at a festive Araneta Coliseum.

An Alaska team that was in shambles the last two games suddenly played great, and the Aces got back on the winning track in a manner that left even their coach, the usually-talkative Tim Cone, struggling to find the words.

"I don't know what it was," Cone said minutes later after his Aces annihilated Red Bull,

100-77. "I honestly didn't think we would win today, much less in the way we did."

"This one was a complete surprise, to tell you the truth."

Alaska established control early and never let up, building leads of as many as 34 points late in the fourth period to snap a two-game slide and improve to 9-7 that kept the Aces mathematically in the hunt for one of the two automatic semifinal spots.

But the Kings were even more surprising.

Down by 19 early against a team that has so far dominated the tournament, Barangay Ginebra rallied to pound out a 100-98 victory over tournament leader Purefoods in the second game.

It was just the seventh win in 16 games for the Kings, who moved 2-1/2 games behind the 9-6 Barako for second spot while the loss was the fourth in 15 games for the Giants.

Sunday Salvation knocked in the go-ahead triple with 57.4 left to give Ginebra a 95-93 spread and finished with 21 points, the same

output plugged in by Eric Menk.

James Yap and Kerby Raymundo, who committed a crucial boo-boo later, had 20 each to pace the Tender Juicy Giants.

"We have really been struggling with our energy the last couple of weeks," Cone, who won a Grand Slam with this franchise in 1996, added. "We were just talking of trying to steal one (win) today by keeping it close (in the endgame).

"I didn't think the energy would suddenly come back today."

Mike Cortez scored 19 points and John Perriols shot 15 and grabbed the same number of boards as Alaska, which lost the 2002 All-Filipino to Coca-Cola on Christmas, won for the first time in three games on this particular playdate.

Red Bull shot a lethargic 27-percent from the field, which statisticians later said could be the worst in the rich history of the franchise.

"We shot the ball pretty well today," Cone

ALASKA/A23

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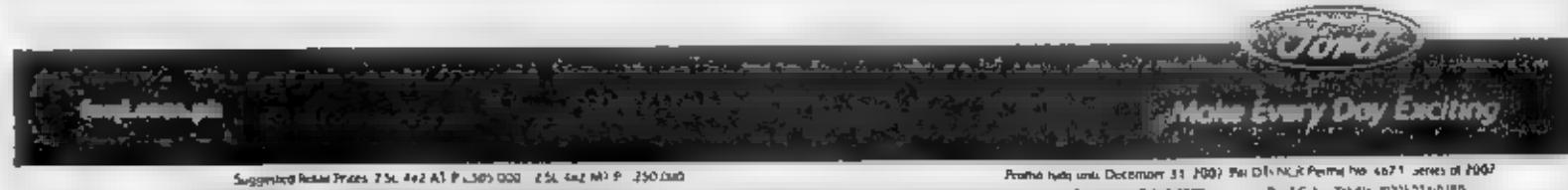
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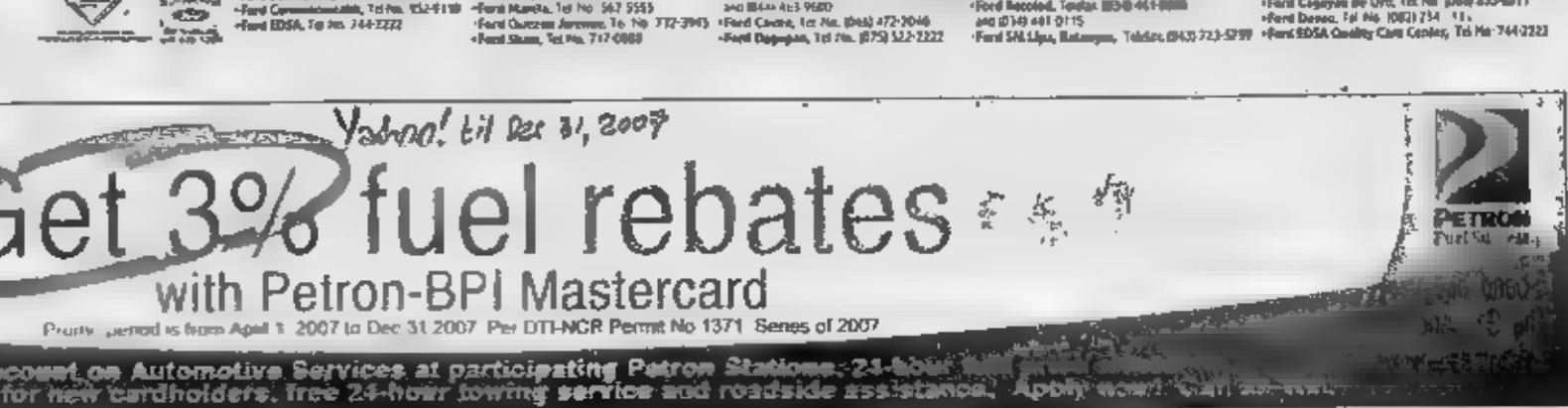
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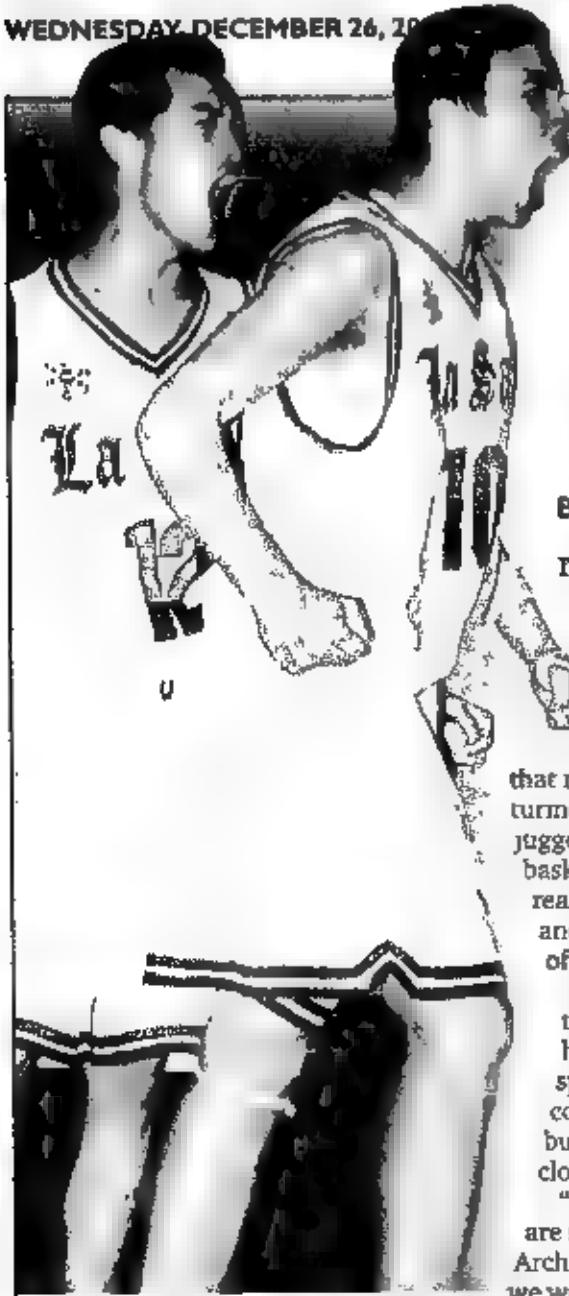
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THAT winning feeling is best captured by the likes of Miguel Okubo (left) and Joshua Webb of the juniors squad. PHOTO

# La Salle gets to the heart of the matter in comeback

By Jasmine W. Payo

IT WAS UNDERSTANDABLE that rust would creep into the La Salle sports machine, especially after a one-year suspension kept them out of the competitive arena.

But there was one place that rust could not reach. And all the turmoil in the world could not stop a juggernaut anchored on a rock solid basketball program because of one reason. The Archers, both seniors and juniors, knew that in the heart of the matter, heart really matters.

Fueled by a throbbing pride that refused to be reined in and a heart that wouldn't give up despite the odds, La Salle capped its comeback year with not just one, but two basketball titles at the close of the UAAP hoop wars.

"Individually, I think my players are really not that great," said Green Archers coach Franz Pumaren. "But we worked as a team."

Rust? It sure looked as if the suspension wrought by a harrowing eligibility scandal lasted just for a day as

the collegiate powerhouse picked up right where it last left off.

As the only squad to consistently enter the Final Four, the Archers' return stint this season turned out no different with TY Tang, Cholo Villanueva, JV Casio and Rico Maier hoisting the charge.

"It only showed how we really prepared for the season," said Pumaren.

The La Salle Zobel Junior Archers—the 2005 champion turned unwitting casualty of the punishment meted on the seniors team—also made positive use of the forced break.

"We were never given a chance to defend our championship last year, but the good part was we started early with our preparation for this season," said Zobel coach Boris Aldeguer.

Although early losses pointed to the damaging effects of the suspension, the UAAP Finals erased any doubts as the La Salle seniors and juniors squads pulled off upset sweeps.

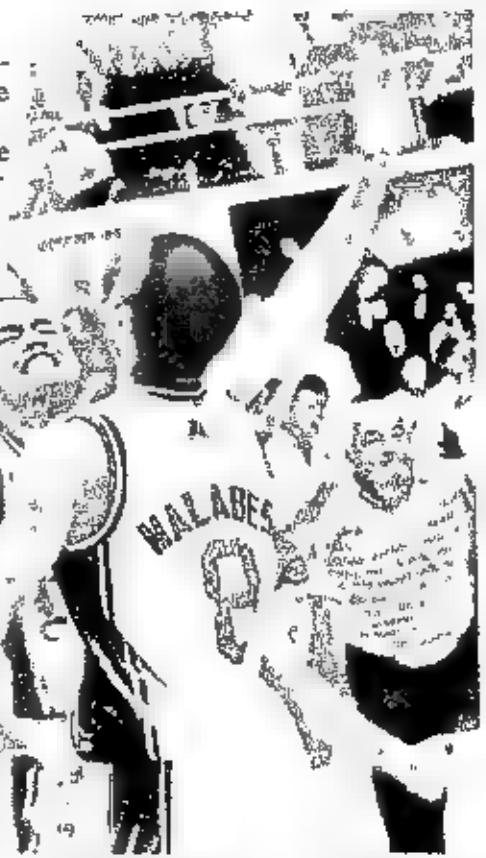
The Green Archers spoiled the perfect 14-0 elimination run of the University of the East Red Warriors during the best-of-three championship showdown to capture their seventh crown.

"Experience was glaringly in our favor," said Pumaren. "My players are veterans of many wars."

But Pumaren, too, pointed to the Archers' trademark strategy: "Our defense was really fantastic in the series. We could not outscore them, they're too talented, so we tried to hold them [down]."

In a similarly unexpected feat, the Junior Archers toppled defending champion and fierce rival Ateneo Blue Eagles in two straight games with Joshua Webb, Marco Fortuna and Jed Manguera starting in their second title run.

"We played Ateneo in the elimination and we were beaten badly, and I thought this won't be our year, but the boys refused to give up," said Aldeguer.



POCHOLO Villanueva (back) and Bader Malabes celebrate a victory over the UE Red Warriors. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

## Alaska clobbers Red Bull

From page A21

added. "And they shot absolutely horrible. I wish I could say that their 27 percent (shooting) was because of our defense."

Alaska didn't need to play much defense, as Red Bull, the runner-up to Barangay Ginebra last year, really did not have the luck of making shots out of the ordinary.

The Barako actually couldn't make all the ordinary shots that came their way.

Only Cyrus Baguio finished in double figures for Red Bull with 18. Junthy Valenzuela, who came into the game averaging 14.9 points, wound up with just two.

Jeffrey Cariaso also scattered 15 and Willie Miller, the reigning MVP, had 13 points, five rebounds and seven assists, his spin move inside the paint that eluded two defenders giving the Aces a 73-44 lead with 1:22 left in the third

The Alaska victory was very important since it put the Aces back inside the circle of teams that would make the playoff outright, at least in the quarterfinals.

The scores:

First Game

ALASKA 100—Cortez 19, Fenios 15, Cariaso 15, Miller 13, Thoss 12, Hugnahan 11, Aban 8, Dela Cruz 5, Bono 2, Quifahan 0, Cabatu 0, Laure 0.

RED BULL 73—Baguio 18, Bugla 8, Cruz 8, Dunell 7, Naja 7, Vaberez 7, Pennisi 7, Camaso 5, Sharma 3, Robinson 3, Hrabak 2, Valenzuela 2.

Quarters: 25-11 43-28, 74-47 100-77

Second Game

BARANGAY GINERA 100—Salvacion 21, Menk 21, Tubid 18, Heiterland 13, Reavis 10, Macapagal 6, Artadi 6, Mamani 3, Aquino 2.

PUREFOODS 98—Yap 20, Raymundo 20, Simon 18, Pingris 12, R. Yap 10, Sanz 7, Adducal 5, Larong 4, Yee 2, Salvador 0, Evangelista 0.

Quarters: 13-30, 41-48, 67-72 100-98

## Patriots...

From page A21

stays in that (loss) column, I'm fine. Basically what I'm saying is that I want to keep winning. To hell with the record."

Along those lines, Moss touched on the team's 15-0 record.

"I don't think the people, and when I say the people I mean the fans of the game of football, I don't think they realize what we're doing, how hard of work we're putting in to what we're trying to accomplish," he said. "Coach Beischuick, before this team was ever brought together, he's already had a history of being able to get things done late in the season, basically come playoff time to make that run."

Last week, Brady threw 13 of his 28 passes in the direction of Moss. Yesterday, he continued to fire passes in Moss's neighborhood, at times seemingly forcing balls into heavy coverage.

"He's had an incredible season for us and it's obvious they pay a lot of attention to him when he's out there on the field, as they should, and you have to find ways to keep him involved," Brady said. "He ran a great route on his first touchdown. (His) second touchdown was a great catch, and whenever he's open he usually gets it. Even when he's not open sometimes I throw it up there." NYTimes News Service

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## SPORTS

Tired of losing,  
Bulls sack coach

CHICAGO Bulls forward Joe Smith (right) and Houston Rockets forward Luis Scola fight for the rebound in a Dec. 22 match won by the Rockets, 116-98.

DEERFIELD, ILLINOIS—SCOTT SKILES was fired Monday as coach of the Chicago Bulls, who have one of the worst records in the Eastern Conference.

The underachieving Bulls (9-16) have lost three of their last four and were booed throughout by the home crowd during Saturday night's 116-98 loss to the Houston Rockets.

"I felt like something was going to happen," forward Luol Deng said. "I didn't know whether it was players or coaches. But you could definitely feel there was something. It just didn't seem like we were on the same page."

With three straight playoff appearances after a long postseason drought, the Bulls' expectations were soaring. Then, they dropped 10 of their first 12 games and they've been unable to capture the intensity that catapulted them into the second round of the playoffs last season.

They've lacked a consistent inside scoring threat the past few years, and now, their perimeter players are off target.

Chicago is shooting a league-worst 41.3 percent, which partially explains why it hasn't been able to sustain a winning streak.

"This was a difficult decision to make, but one that was necessary at this time," Bulls general manager John Paxson said in a release. "Scott helped us in many ways during his time with the Bulls; most importantly, he helped this franchise get back to respectability. I am appreciative of his hard work and the imprint that he left on our team."

The Bulls didn't immediately announce a replacement for Skiles, who went 165-172 after replacing Bill Cartwright in November 2003.

Chicago is in a familiar spot with this season's slow start.

The Bulls dropped their first nine in 2004-05 and were 4-15 before going on a surge that led to 47 wins and their first playoff appearance since the Michael Jordan era.

They needed a late surge the next season to make it to the playoffs, winning 12 of their final 14 regular-season games to finish with 41 wins.

And with high expectations follow-



SKILES: Thrown out

ing the arrival of Ben Wallace, the Bulls promptly dropped nine of their first 12 last season before turning things around. They wound up with 49 wins and swept Miami to capture a playoff series, then lost in six games to Detroit in the second round.

There were no major acquisitions in the off-season. Instead, the most notable moves were the ones the Bulls did not make—contract extensions for Ben Gordon and Deng and a blockbuster trade for Kobe Bryant.

Deng called Skiles "a great coach" but the effort wasn't there, particularly the past few games. Whether this wakes them up or is just the start of a shake-up remains to be seen.

"It's a lot on our shoulders right now," Deng said.

Skiles and the Bulls nearly parted ways in June 2005. Instead, he agreed to a four-year, \$16.5 million contract extension after talking with owner Jerry Reinsdorf.

AP

## With no exemptions, Wie misses first PGA event since 2004

FLORIDA—MICHELLE WIE MIGHT start her 2008 season in Hawaii, but not at the Sony Open.

Wie, who has played the PGA Tour event every year since 2004, did not receive one of the four unrestricted sponsor exemptions, tournament director Ray Stosik said Thursday.

Swing coach David Leadbetter said

the 18-year-old from Honolulu likely would ask for exemptions at one or both of the LPGA Tour events in Hawaii that kick off the women's golf season in February. He also said competition against the men would probably be on hold until she gets her health and her game back together.

"She's not ready to play in that yet,"

Leadbetter said of the Sony Open, where Wie first rose to fame by shooting 68 at age 14 and missing the cut by one shot. "Her health is getting better; her game is getting better, the confidence is growing."

"The whole goal is to get back on track after the debacle last year."

The debacle included Wie trying to

play despite both wrists being injured. She made only three cuts in nine starts, withdrew twice and only broke par two times. She also endured harsh criticism from Annika Sorenstam, who was angered by Wie pulling out of the Swede's tournament, only to be seen hitting balls on the range at the next tournament.

The Sony Open still will have a couple of teenagers from Hawaii in the tournament that starts Jan. 10.

One exemption went to Todd Fujikawa, who last year became the youngest player in 50 years to make a cut on the PGA Tour. The other was given to 17-year-old Alex Chung, Wie's former classmate at Punahoa School. AP

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Mirza's wish:  
Injury-free season

MUMBAI, INDIA—INDIA'S SANIA MIRZA is hoping for an injury-free new year after her 2007 season was cut short due to a series of niggles.

Mirza, 21, achieved a career-high singles ranking of 27 in August, following an impressive run in the US hardcourt circuit when she reached the Stanford Classic final.

But she lost time to injury, and a surgery.

"My first goal is to remain injury-free for the year. I lost three-four months (to injuries) last year," Mirza told reporters at a promotional event on Monday.

World number 31 Mirza suffered a wrist injury after the US Open, where she reached the third round, and then cut back the season by a couple of weeks.

SANIA Mirza poses on a yacht off the western coast of Mumbai. AP

following a strained abductor muscle in October.

The Indian number one underwent surgery in March following a ligament injury in her right knee at the Qatar Open.

Mirza, who will be back in action next month in Hobart, is hoping for a good outing at the Australian Open.

"Being the first grand slam, there is where you have the most surprises because I feel because everyone's coming out of their off season," said Mirza, who beat five top-20 players including former number one Martina Hingis last year.

"A lot of seeds go out in the first couple of rounds," said Mirza, who has reached the fourth round of the 2005 US Open. Reuters

## Beckham back in Capello's fold after bitter separation

LONDON—DAVID BECKHAM IS EAGER to play under new England manager Fabio Capello despite the stormy relationship the two shared at Real Madrid.

The 32-year-old midfielder has played 99 games for England and hopes to reach his century of appearances in England's friendly against Switzerland at Wembley Stadium on Feb. 6.

"Fabio is one of the managers players I look up to and want to manage them. I hope I'll be part of his plans," Beckham told BBC Radio in an interview to be broadcast on Christmas Day. Excerpts were released by the BBC on Monday.

"I think he is a great appointment for England. Everyone wants someone leading you that has respect and success. He has definitely got that in his career."

Capello dropped Beckham from Real Madrid when the former England captain announced his move to play for the Los Angeles Galaxy in Major League Soccer. But Beckham won back his place and helped Madrid win the Spanish league title last season.

"There were ups and downs with me and the manager at the time but he brought me back into the team and he had the belief in me to put me back in the team," Beckham said.

AP

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 rates in January, says  
**DBS /B2**

# BUSINESS

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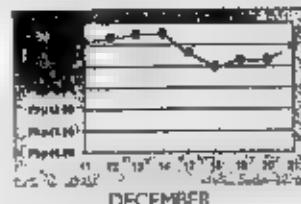
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# IFC's P5-B bond float hits a snag

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## STOCK MARKET



(See stock market report on Page B6)

## Lackluster trade seen

MARKETS REOPEN TODAY AFTER A long holiday break with trading expected to be thin and uneventful throughout the week.

Traders said that aside from some stocks which could rise on window-dressing activities by institutional fund managers, the market is expected to trade within a very narrow range.

## BIR refuses to exempt securities from taxes

By Doris C. Dumao

THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCE CORP'S PLAN TO OFFER P5 billion in long-term peso-denominated bonds has hit a snag due to the Bureau of Internal Revenue's refusal to exempt from taxes the securities to be issued by the World Bank's investment banking arm, banking sources said.

The five-year bond float by IFC, which was supposed to be the second triple A-rated supranational institution after the Asian Development Bank to offer peso bonds, was originally planned for issuance last September.

Asked about the tax issue with the BIR, IFC country manager Jesse Ang

told reporters: "We're a tax-exempt institution. When ADB issued their bonds in May, they were tax-exempt, so we should be treated similarly."

Banking sources said the BIR, on the other hand, was citing a precedent in the past when the IFC was not tax-exempt.

But the IFC is confident that the BIR would soon issue a favorable ruling on its bond float.

"We have to go through our approval process. We have made our application and talked to the agencies. What we're going through is some verification process," Ang said.

Until the BIR approves the tax exemption, the IFC said the bond float would likely be on hold.

"We are a multilateral institution like the ADB, I think the question here is if an institution like us which is part of the World Bank group, which has a treaty (with the government), shouldn't be tax-exempt," Ang said.

"It's a technicality, so it's up to the

government how they will deal with this. But clearly if they acted with precedent with ADB, they will figure it out," he added.

By offering the bonds, Ang said the IFC would provide opportunity for Filipino investors to invest in peso-denominated triple-A bonds.

IFC has mandated First Metro Investment Corp. and British bank Standard Chartered to arrange the P5-billion bond float.

FMIC and Standard Chartered also handled the P5-billion five-year bond float of ADB last May. It carried a fixed rate of 5.23 percent a year and was priced at a spread of 31 basis

IFC'S P5-B/B3

## Dollar remittances fuel new affluence among Filipinos

By Daxim L. Lucas

(Conclusion)

EXPATRIATE FILIPINOS HAVE SO FAR sent home a record-breaking amount of dollar remittances, fueling a spending boom that has permeated almost all sectors of the economy.

According to the **SPECIAL REPORT** Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), overseas Filipinos workers have sent home \$11.9 billion as of the first 10 months of the year. This is expected to rise further to at least \$14 billion by yearend.

Including the amount sent home through informal remittance channels,

the conservative estimate of OFW funds sent home would stand close to \$20 billion by the end of this year—almost 15 percent of the country's gross economic output, which is expected to be worth about \$137 billion this year.

Nowhere is this phenomenon more evident than in the country's numerous malls, which have been packed with holiday shoppers in recent weeks.

"Sales have really been strong for us this year," said Jeffrey C. Lim, the chief financial officer of SM Prime Holdings Inc., the company which runs the country's biggest chain of shopping malls.

In an interview, Lim said that same store sales in the various SM malls have so far shown a 7-percent increase on the average, surpassing sales reported in recent years.

"This is a very good figure for us," he said, adding that this report has yet to factor in sales from the previous weekend, when shopping was expected to peak ahead of Christmas Day.

"We are still looking at the numbers, but for certain, [sales] will be stronger than last year's," Lim said.

According to the latest BSP survey, food and household needs continued to dominate the share of spending of consumers in general, but more so in

the case of OFWs' local beneficiaries.

So-called "consumer durables" like appliances also rank high on the list—a fact that is not lost on mall operator SM.

"During these times, it is really the food [segment] that does very well," Lim said. "When people go shopping, they also eat."

While value-for-money shopping has always been a strong theme for SM, Lim noted that the growing affluence has also resulted in stronger sales for many of the higher-end retailers in the malls.

"Many high-end stores at the Mall of Asia, for example, are doing very well," he said. "I guess [sales are] increasing across the board."

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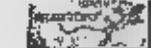
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## PNOC seen pursuing more hydro projects

By Abigail L. Ho

STATE RUN PHILIPPINE NATIONAL OIL Co. is actively pursuing various hydropower projects all over the country, in an effort to help the country achieve 60-percent energy self-sufficiency by 2010.

PNOC president Antonio Cailao said the state firm was looking at developing some 263.9 megawatts (MW) in total hydropower potential.

The prospective hydropower project sites include Paracelus in the Mountain Province with a potential of 3.5 MW; Pasil-Kalinga in Kalinga, 18 MW; Diatigasan, 40 MW; Bulanog-Batang, 150 MW; Timbahan in Aklan, 23.5 MW; Villasiga in Antique, 16.5 MW; and Langogan, 5.6 MW and Babuyan, 6.8 MW both in Palawan.

Two of the potential hydropower sites, Cailao said, were now ready for development.

Aklan Rep. Florencio Miraflores had filed House Bill No. 5705, which allowed the development of the proposed Timbahan project in the area.

The bill is now under review by the House of the Representatives.

The Villasiga project is also on the development stage, with PNOC coordinating with Vergel Consult for the submission of project proponent K-Water's formal intent or proposal for the project.

PNOC had already sent a project profile and status of the project to the Department of Energy, Cailao said.

Earlier in the year, PNOC signed a memorandum of agreement with the Northern Mindanao Electric Cooperative Association (Normeca), which formalized a technical alliance that would facilitate the development of the \$245-million Bulanog-Batang hydropower project in Bukidnon.

Under the agreement, the two parties will jointly review the potential of the Bulanog and Batang rivers as viable sources of hydroelectric power.

PNOC is also reviewing the feasibility of the Langogan and Babuyan hydropower sites in Palawan.

Right now, the country's total hydropower capacity is placed at 3,342.76 MW.

The total capacity is composed of 3,253.16 MW from 21 large-hydro plants, 89.07 MW from 52 mini hydro facilities, and 0.56 MW from 61 micro-hydro plants.

## Pacific Online posts 16% sales growth to P430M

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

LOTTERY EQUIPMENT SUPPLIER PACIFIC Online Systems Corp. said it had generated total sales of P430 million from January to November, up 16 percent from year-ago level.

This represents Pacific Online's share in the total sales of state-owned Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office in the Visayas and Mindanao, which stood at P4.3 billion in the first 11 months of the year.

Pacific Online is the exclusive online lottery system provider of PCSO in the Visayas and Mindanao.

Company chair Willy Ocier said the 11-month performance would bring Pacific Online's net income to P150 million this year, higher than the P50 million posted in 2006.

With the expected robust December sales, the full-year revenue is seen to rise by 20 percent from last year. The company's optimism was fueled by the recent roll out of new online lottery terminals and introduction of new digit games.

Lucky Circle Corp., a wholly owned indirect subsidiary, and its "Instant Scratch" lottery cards are performing strongly nationwide, said Ocier.

Last July, Pacific Online launched the marketing and distribution of PCSO's "Instant Scratch It Lottery Tickets."

Two months later, the company bought Lucky Circle Corp., the exclusive lotto operator in SM Supermalls nationwide.

# Bangko Sentral to further cut key policy rates in January, says DBS

Recent reduction seen not enough to stem sharp rise of peso

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS may be forced to further cut its key policy rates in January in view of the strong peso's dampening effects on the economy, according to investment bank DBS.

DBS, in a paper, said the recent cut in the central bank's key policy rates might not be enough to stem the sharp rise of the local currency.

"Peso appreciation helps to lessen the pain of higher crude oil prices. But the other edge of the sword is far sharper, as peso appreciation takes a direct toll on the economy's two key pillars—consumer spending and exports—by eating into the remitted earnings of overseas foreign workers and by hurting export competitiveness," it said.

In a paper entitled "Economics Markets Strategy," the research group of DBS said the BSP rates would likely be slashed further to 5 percent and 7 percent for the overnight borrowing and lending, respectively, from 5.25 percent and 7.25 percent.

Lower interest rates discourage the substantial entry of foreign portfolio investments, thereby easing the buildup of the country's dollar holdings. This, in turn, will temper the peso's rise.

Last week, the BSP cut its key policy rates for the fourth time this year by 25 basis points.

In the meantime, DBS expects the economy to grow by 6.6 percent next year, slowing down from its projected economic growth of 6.9 percent this year. Its growth forecast was less optimistic than the government's target of 6.3 to 7 percent for 2008.

The investment bank's growth projection

took into consideration the ill-effects of a strong peso on household consumption and exports.

It said that in the first three quarters of the year, remittances sent by OFWs grew by 15 percent year-on-year in dollar terms. But in peso terms, it said the growth was only 4.4 percent due to the strengthening of the peso.

DBS said the growth in the peso value of the remittances was just a bit faster than the 3.2-percent inflation rate. This scenario does not encourage aggressive household spending, the bank said.

It said consumer spending next year would likely just match the 5.7-percent growth expected this year—that is if the BSP's monetary policy would be more accommodating than the current. If not, growth in consumer spending would be slower.

With regard to exports, DBS said growth would likely hit only 3 percent next year, much lower than the government's 8-percent target. The bank's 2008 forecast for exports growth, however, is higher than its projection of only 1.3 percent for this year.

"One comfort, however, is that exports may be less vulnerable than consumers to the vagaries of the peso, since a significant chunk of the country's exports now go to Asia, which has experienced similar currency strengthening, albeit to a lesser degree," DBS said.

It noted that besides the strong peso, the exports sector was also disadvantaged by the easing of the growth in global demand, partly due to the slowdown of the US economy—the Philippines' biggest export market.

## What will the Senate do with Senator Trillanes

### QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honesto C. General

such illustrious names as Recto and Taftada. Jovito Salonga is considered the best president we never had.

Now comes Senator Antonio Trillanes IV. While in police detention accused on trial in a civilian court on a capital offense for leading the Oakwood military mutiny 4 years ago, he ran on the opposition slate and won a Senate seat, garnering over 11 million votes. We can wait a long time, but we will not see another phenomenon like him.

His feat should have moved Trillanes to humility. If he thanked those who voted for him and concentrated on his defense, he probably would have gained more sympathy.

Also, had he kept quiet, he would have followed the age-old unwritten rule that a lawmaker should stay in the sidelines during the first year of his term. A newcomer does not upset the old-timers in the public eye.

Acting less and less like a senator of the realm, Trillanes walked out of the trial court during a hearing. Even his own counsel was caught off guard. Trillanes did not just insult the judge who was robed with full authority to apply the rule of law and give everyone a fair trial. He thumbed his nose at the judicial system and the entire Filipino people.

Finally, Trillanes and his buddy, Brigadier General Lim, marched 2 kilometers to Peninsula Hotel and called for an uprising. Everybody was invited to the party, but nobody came.

In a few hours, the ill-conceived rebellion was crushed. What will the Senate do with a member that has disgraced one of our most cherished institutions?

The rolls of senators include



AGRICULTURE Secretary Arthur C. Yap tours the Pangasinan Tropical Fruits Multipurpose Cooperative (PTFMP) processing and packaging plant in Barangay Matulong, Manaoag, Pangasinan, with Lito M. Arenas (left), owner of L.A. Trading and chair of PTFMP.

## Bangko Sentral relaxes rules on derivatives

By Doris C. Dumlae

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS has approved a set of guidelines liberalizing the use of derivatives or hedging instruments to provide banks with expanded opportunities for financial risk management and investment diversification.

The BSP's policymaking Monetary Board approved last week a more liberal framework but still required different levels of licensing for those wishing to handle derivatives and structured products beyond the simple or plain-vanilla instruments, central bank sources said.

The sources said the BSP would determine how sophisticated an applicant-bank was and issue licenses

based on the array of products it could handle.

"There are levels of discipline because the Monetary Board does not want all of them taking aggressive positions because these are what caused heavy losses (for many big banks) in the US subprime crisis," the source said.

The following are the different types of authority or licenses for handling derivatives:

- Expanded dealer authority—given to banks with comprehensive and integrated risk management and sales practices that are deemed appropriate and adequate for the level of derivative activities.
- Limited dealer authority—for banks wishing to operate only as

dealers of specific derivatives products;

- Expanded user authority—for those wishing to be end-users of a wider array of financial derivatives; and

- Limited user authority—for those who want to be an end-user of specific derivatives.

In the past, banks would have to seek MB clearance for longer-term derivative contracts.

A derivative is a financial instrument that derives its value primarily from the performance of an underlying variable. Its value changes in response to the change in the underlying commodity or index such as interest rate; price of a financial asset; foreign exchange rate; indices of financial

asset prices, or interest rate or foreign exchange rates, or credit rating or credit index.

Financial derivative activities also include transactions in cash instruments with embedded derivatives that reshape the risk-return pattern, such as credit-linked notes and other structured products.

After easing restrictions on foreign exchange trading and beefing up its own mapping up tools, the BSP liberalized the use of hedging mechanisms as another way of dismantling barriers to outward flow of capital since financial institutions would be more confident of exploring fresh investment opportunities once armed with a wider array of hedging tools.

## Measures to mitigate adverse effects of strong peso pushed

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE PHILIPPINE EXPORTERS Confederation is pushing for more measures that would mitigate the negative effects of the continued appreciation of the peso on the very sectors that bring in foreign currency.

Philexport president Sergio Ortiz-Luis Jr. said in an interview the group was calling for the exemption of exporters from the value-added tax when

they buy raw materials.

"We are also supporting a proposal made by Sen. Mar Roxas II that the VAT on petroleum products be lifted for at least six months," Ortiz-Luis said.

He added that Philexport was reiterating calls for the government to consider prepaying foreign loans "in a more serious manner."

"Another step that could be taken is to refrain from foreign borrowings," Ortiz-Luis

said. "From just 70 percent of total borrowings, we could make all borrowings domestic."

Further, he said Philexport officials had engaged in lengthy discussion with counterparts from the Philippine Stock Exchange, Development Bank of the Philippines and the House of Representative's committee on trade and industry about allowing local investors to buy shares in companies that were not listed in

the local bourse. "This can be made through depository receipts which could help siphon off excess dollars circulating in the local market," Ortiz-Luis explained.

He said the use of DRs had to be facilitated considering that a dollar bourse under the PSE had been found impractical.

He added that trading through DRs could become part of the functions of the PSE, with stock brokers and fund man-

agers playing roles in the transactions.

In an interview last November, Ortiz-Luis said the government should intervene to stop the continued appreciation of the peso amid fresh forecasts that showed the local currency would further strengthen in the coming years.

He said there was still a lot that the government could do to address the trend that adversely affect families of over

seas Filipino workers and those whose livelihood depend on exports.

Ortiz-Luis, who is also vice chair of the Export Development Council, said the government could choose to peg the exchange rate to P47 to the dollar.

The economy could afford a 10-percent depreciation of the peso to 47 \$1, which would result to a marginal increase in inflation of 1.2 percent, he said.

# Its debt in decline, gov't saved P32B in 1st 11 mos

## Telcos brace for holiday network traffic

CELLULAR NETWORK OPERATORS Smart Communications Inc., Globe Telecom Inc. and Sun Cellular said they were on red alert for the holiday rush of messages and advised subscribers to avoid joining the "traffic jam" of messages toward midnight of Dec. 31.

"The surge of text messages and calls really peak on the 31st (of December) and there is a greater tendency to bunch up toward midnight. The activity is more dispersed around Dec. 24 and 25," Smart spokesperson Ramon Isberto said in a phone interview.

"The traffic traditionally doubles around New Year's Eve. We have close to 50 million subscribers between the cellular providers Globe, Smart and Sun. Imagine if all of them text at the same time," added Globe spokesperson Jones Campos.

Smart, Globe and Sun said they currently have network operations and mobile crews on standby until Jan. 2 or Jan. 3, depending on the traffic.

"We have our technical group on 24/7 duty," Sun Cellular senior vice president for legal affairs William Pamintuan said.

Isberto and Campos said their respective personnel were also on standby 24/7.

Constant monitoring is important because network traffic is not just coming from Metro Manila, Isberto said.

"The pattern changes a little every year, depending on where mobile phone takeup increases, how long the holiday is and where people spend their free time. This year, we have a long holiday and there will likely be a lot of traffic outside Metro Manila, especially Central and Southern Luzon," Isberto said.

"We are monitoring network traffic all day so we can reroute calls going to clogged parts of the network, and if there is a physical problem, we have ready crews for deployment," he added.

Nevertheless, texters would do well to avoid the New Year's Eve rush.

"If the networks get clogged, your text message may reach the recipient on New Year's day anyway. Texters can avoid frustration by texting on Jan. 1 or much earlier than midnight of Dec. 31," Campos said.

Riza T. Olchondra

From January to November, spending reached a total of P1.032 trillion

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT SAVED P32 billion in the first 11 months of the year, as low interest rates and a strong peso allowed it to pay less than-programmed interest on maturing liabilities.

According to the Department of Finance, the low-interest-rate environment and sharp rise of the peso have propped up the government's financial condition.

DOF data showed that the government's total spending from January to November reached P1.032 trillion. A part of it went to covered payments for interest on maturing obligations.

The amount could have been P32 billion higher had interests and foreign exchange settled at the rates expected by economic managers

when they drafted this year's budget program.

The lower-than-expected interest rates meant the government would spend less for interest payments, both for domestic and foreign loans.

On the other hand, the appreciation of the peso trimmed the government's foreign-currency denominated debts in peso terms.

Under the 2007 budget program, the 91-day Treasury bill rate was assumed to settle at an average of 4 to 4.5 percent.

But actual average for the three-month debt paper stood at only 3.4 percent.

Also, the peso was supposed to reach an average of 47 to 49 against the US dollar. But it averaged 42.798 during the period.

The lower-than-programmed

spending for interest payments helped government to attain a budget surplus in the first 11 months of the year.

The 12.6-billion surplus as of November bolstered expectations that the government will attain a balanced budget, if not a surplus, for the full year of 2007—a year ahead of the 2008 schedule.

Finance officials said the low interest rate environment was due to improved macroeconomic indicators that improved the government's credit image.

Low interest rates are also expected to spur more investments next year, they added.

The appreciation of the peso, on the other hand, was due to the huge dollar inflows in the form of remittances and investments.

The peso has been one of the strongest Asian currencies so far this year.

Besides the lower-than-programmed spending, higher-than-target revenues from privatization also helped attain the surplus in the first 11 months.

The government raised a total P90 billion from asset sale this year, much higher than the target of only P25 billion. The government worked on raising privatization revenues more than what was programmed to compensate for the shortfall in tax collection.

Key government assets sold this year was the 80-percent stake in PNOC-Energy Development Corp. and the 46-percent stake in Philippine Telecommunications Investments Corp.

## In 2007, yield of fisheries sector expected to reach 4.9 million MT

By Amy R. Remo

THE BUREAU OF FISH-ERIES and Aquatic Resources said it was confident of hitting an 8-percent growth for the fisheries sector in 2007, with output seen reaching as

Last year, the fisheries sector registered the biggest gain among farm subsectors at 6.31 percent, with production hitting 4.4 million metric tons.

The fisheries sector accounted for 24.92 percent of the total agriculture output in 2006, with gross earnings amounting to P163.4 billion.

To add to the output this year, BFAR jumpstarted the breeding of Pangasius, a freshwater species of catfish which enjoys huge demand from hotels and high-end restaurants, and the Pacific white shrimp, to revive the once robust local shrimp industry.

Earlier, Sarmiento said the industry could produce five million metric tons if the government would allow an additional P170 million and that there would be no natural disasters or disease outbreaks.

"With aquaculture's sustained growth, BFAR expects total fisheries production to reach as much as 5.3 million metric tons in 2008," he said.

The additional budget

would be used mostly for production enhancement and hunger mitigation projects," he said.

The bureau's programs include setting up more mariculture parks, from the current 25, mostly in the Visayas

To date, the Philippines is the eighth largest fish producer in the world, contributing to the total global production of 146.27 million MT, based on statistics from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Tuna is the country's top export product and is shipped to many parts of the world including the United States, Japan, China and the European Union.

The Philippines is also the world's second largest producer of seaweeds, with production reaching 1.39 million MT or 11.6 percent of the total world production of 12 million MT.

Deposit Amount	Interest Rates	
In Pesos	Less than 1 Year	1 Year
100,000 - 499,999	3.50	3.50
500,000 - 999,999	3.75	3.75
1.0MM - 4.99MM	4.50	4.50
5.0MM - 9.99MM	4.75	4.75
10.0MM and up	5.00	5.00

Rates are subject to change without prior notice, on per annum basis and net of documentary stamp taxes.

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## Transport officials consider replacing Naia 3 contractor

By Riza T. Olchondra

THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION and Communication (DOTC) has fired Takenaka Corp. from the Ninoy Aquino International Airport terminal 3 (Naia 3) project for failing to complete its work.

But the termination may not be permanent, as DOTC Secretary Leandro Mendoza said Takenaka is asking for another chance.

"They submitted a letter of reconsideration," he told reporters. "Miaa (Manila International Airport Authority) is studying it."

Mendoza said that, in the meantime, DOTC is looking for other contractors to undertake the retrofit and finish the airport construction.

The department has not set a timetable for the project's completion.

"Actually, it's not really a matter of targets anymore," Mendoza said. "What is important is to make it very, very safe."

Takenaka has not finished 2 percent of

the airport construction project because it halted work when a legal battle for ownership of Naia 3 broke out.

The government took over the terminal in December 2005 from project proponent Philippine International Air Terminals Co. (Piatco).

Thus, after the Supreme Court declared Piatco's original build-operate-transfer contract for the terminal null and disadvantageous to the government due to onerous changes made to the original contract.

The situation was compounded when part of the ceiling in the main terminal building collapsed in April 2006.

Miaa contracted foreign experts Ove Arup and TCGI to check the structure and they recommended the postponement of plans to open Naia 3 after finding serious structural defects.

Takenaka disagreed with some of the findings of Ove Arup and TCGI.

Negotiations for the remaining work has progressed at a snail's pace since then.

## IFC's P5-B bond float hits ...

From page B1

points over the tax-adjusted five-year Philippine treasury bonds.

Local investors and regulators welcome a domestic issuance by supranational institutions as this implies a vote of confidence on the country's domestic capital markets. There is also a huge demand for IOUs issued by triple A-rated institutions.

The ADB, for instance, was supposed to issue only P2.5 billion last May but ended up doubling its offering size due to strong market demand. The ADB offering was oversubscribed by 1.4 times.

Since early 2004, the ADB has completed market-opening transactions in the region's

local currency bond markets, including India, Malaysia, People's Republic of China and Thailand. The proceeds of the bond issue will be part of ADB's ordinary capital resources and will be used in its nonconcessional operations.

IFC's plan to issue domestic bonds is thus seen as another step that will contribute to local capital market development.

Liquidity in the local bond market has greatly improved, allowing supranational issuers to price their bonds reasonably, following the government's ongoing program to weed out dormant tenors and replacing them with more actively traded terms.

## Dollar remittances fuel ...

From page B1

more affluent with the surge in dollars sent home from abroad.

He is worried that so much money is being spent on consumption, but he is also hopeful that Filipinos are starting to look toward the longer-term future—as evidenced by rising savings and investment in real estate.

"We can see that the lines are always long and that people are always exchanging dollars [for pesos]."

BSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo acknowledges that many Filipinos now feel

more affluent with the surge in dollars sent home from abroad.

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## Things to do in 2008

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS ARE wonderful things. Despite the fact that I've been unable to keep any of the resolutions I've ever made since childhood, new ones are still made each and every year. In what looks like a continuous exercise in futility, resolutions aren't really about enforcing binding contracts—resolutions are about hope.

Each year brings the possibility of change for the better; however the plot may play out. So here's a list of things that have to be done in the coming year, that somehow my little world of cars and driving becomes just a wee bit wider.

## A need to look beyond

There is a need to look beyond the major brands for value-laden automobiles. Everyone in the beat will easily cover all the significant launches from the major players. Yet there are cars out there from the smaller, second line manufacturers that could possibly be good, solid products.

Kia's Carens CRDi looks promising. Hyundai's new Elantra diesel might be worth a long look. Heck, even Ssangyong might have a surprise up its sleeve. If that last statement doesn't show just how much I'm trying then I don't know what will.

## More stressful, dangerous

Driving around the city on our daily commutes easily makes up 90 percent of the time motorists spend behind the wheel. Sadly, this is a segment of our driving lives that is becoming more stressful and dangerous.

New regulations and traffic schemes from the authorities catch us by surprise, often allowing some unscrupulous elements new venues for revenue collection. Even some of the congestion reduction schemes seem to have backfired, effectively reducing our main thoroughfares' number of lanes. We the motoring public should speak so we can be heard by those who make

## MY DRIFT

Andre Palma



## the decisions about these things

The underbone scourge grows as hundreds of thousands, if not millions of these cheap motorcycles are added to the streets every year. Worse still is the rise of unregulated and unlicensed short hop underbone taxis in areas without effective public transportation coverage. This is truly scary.

Add these to the already lethal mix of the average untrained and undisciplined underbone rider and it's no wonder sources tell me that an average of a dozen underbone riders are killed on Metro Manila streets on a daily basis. Something needs to be done; these things need to be talked about in the

open so someone in a position of authority can start saving lives.

On a lighter, more personal note, there is a need to diversify my own drive. Ever since the beginning of this column, one of the main aims has been to try and put you the reader behind the wheel of significant driving experiences. Sadly this is limited by the author's own driving experience.

The solution comes in expanding the driving horizon so to speak, of trying new things in order to bring the reader a deeper, richer experience. Three particular disciplines call out to me. The flash and brash world of drift is tempting with all the sideways action and the tire smoke. Four-wheel-drive trailing, going way beyond where the pavement ends into the heart of nature, has its appeal.

## A slight possibility

In rally raiding though, the long distance point A to point B racing similar

to the legendary Dakar top the list. Cross your fingers and toes as you read this as there is a slight possibility that this writer might score a pay drive with a works team in a Southeast Asian leg of a Regional Rally Raid Series. I've packed my gear and written out my will in anticipation. Rest assured that the reader, will be along for the ride, in a rally prepped T-class pickup likely, if everything pans out.

So there it is ladies and gentlemen, a short list of things that have to be done and quite a few things that just need to be done. Again, in New Year's resolutions we hope for things to become better, for life to show us a pair of aces instead of deuces. It is only by personal effort though that our wishes will come to pass. Change starts with the individual as they say. Happy holidays to you and your loved ones, dear readers. Let us hope that we all have much more to look forward to in 2008.

PHINOMOTORSPORTS.COM/HEBIS

## Sexy toughies

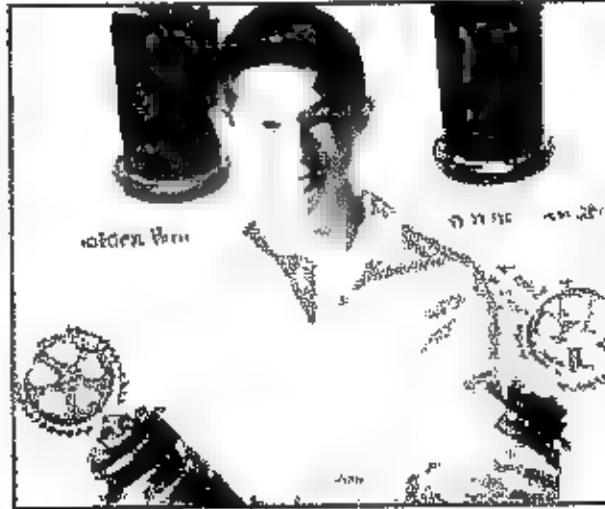
## Christmas wishes, New Year's resolutions

Compiled by Tessa R. Salazar

(First of two parts)

**H**OW TIME RACES BY! This year's movers and shakers on the tracks may have crossed finish lines first so many times, but these overachievers, like what Mick Jagger sings, just "can't get no satisfaction."

At this end-of-the-year pit stop for INQUIRER Motoring is a glimpse of what our homegrown motorsports heroes have set their sights on for 2008.



"This Christmas and the coming year I wish that the Tyson Sy Foundation will be able to continue its medical missions and assistance to the poor. (My New Year's resolution) is to have a better attitude as a person and a race driver. I also want to win a championship next year."

— Tyson Sy, 20, 2006 Philippine National Formula Three Champion, Golden Wheel International Motorsports Driver of the Year, Asian Formula Three Driver of the Year and Best Asian Driver in the 2007 Star Mazda Championship



"To be able to race in Formula Ford and Drifting. (My resolution) To spread the advocacy for road safety and also be able to clinch a championship."

— Pia Boren, 25, 2004 Ford Lynx Cup champion and lady drifter



"I wish to get the scholarship from BMW Asia. (Resolution) Manage my studies and racing career better and earn from other international drivers."

— Marion Stockinger, 16, 3-time Philippine Rotax Max champ and 1st Filipino to land in the top 10 in the 2007 World Karting Championship



"I wish to get more sponsors for me and my sister Michele. (Resolution) To be the best Filipino driver in the Asian Formula Renault China Series."

— Mark Bumgarner, 16, the "Prince" of Philippine Karting

From page B8

## Safety enhanced

Honda's own G-Force Control Technology, introduced in 1998, also brings the crash safety performance of Honda cars to the highest standards in the world.

Not only will this provide a crush-proof survival zone for the passenger but the G-Force control technology also protect vulnerable road users, like cyclists, motorcyclists and pedestrians, during a crash.

This technology also enhances the other safety features inside the all-new CR-V including the dual supplementary restraint system and side airbag, occupant position detection system (which intelligently detects weight, height, and positioning of the front passenger as to whether to deploy the airbags or not).

## Raw power

Not to be outdone, Mitsubishi made sure they also have a formidable contender in their all-new Mitsubishi Outlander.

This four-wheel-drive sprinter is powered by a sprightly and high-revving 220 horsepower 3.0-liter and all-aluminum engine.

Driving the all-new Outlander is more fun than you might expect, as its well-tuned chassis gives it sporty reflexes around corners and transmits considerable feedback to the driver.

Once revved up, the Mivec (that's short for Mitsubishi Innovative Valve-timing Electronic Control System) engine moves the all-new Outlander along powerfully and confidently.

Shift from the 6-speed automatic transmission with manual shift gate (Invecs II with Sportronic) and magnesium alloy paddle shifters on the steering wheel was quick, and the sport shifter offered an option to drive with a bit more spirited attitude than is appropriate for

a family SUV

## Perfect family vehicle

Not just for spirited driving, the all-new Outlander could also be a perfect family vehicle.

This P1.688 million compact SUV is bigger than most of its counterpart with its 4.64 meters (length) x 1.8 m (width) x 1.72 m (height) dimension.

This dimension is much appreciated once inside seat spacing is comfortable and the back has a huge cargo space measuring 13 cubic feet.

Unlike other SUVs, the all-new Outlander's "flap-fold" tailgate is divided, with 70 percent a liftgate and the remainder either a fold-down tailgate or short bulkhead.

In either case, each segment's weight is lighter than a pickup's tailgate or full-size lift gate, which is perfect for those who just want to quickly dump their groceries and other belongings at the back.

Of course, for larger packages that require a wider opening, dropping the mini tailgate is just a swift, simple and lightweight chore.

## Rockford Fosgate

Still confused as to what crossover or SUV to buy? Then the all-new Outlander's tailored 650-watt Rockford Fosgate sound system should probably do it.

Its six in-dash CD/MP3/Tuner with nine speakers, including a rear 10-inch subwoofer, promises to beat any manufacturer-supplied audio system.

Aside from the all-new Outlander, only the Endeavor, Mitsubishi's mid-sized SUV, is privileged to be equipped with a Rockford Fosgate sound system.

According to Mitsubishi Motors Philippines Corp., such total redesign aimed the all-new Outlander further in the upscale level.

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## TRANSPORT TRIVIA By Emman Cesa

## Cars go artsy fartsy

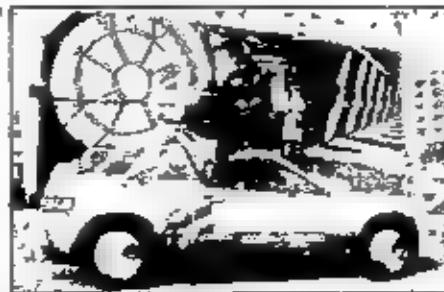
WHILE EVERYONE HEADS TO AND glams up for many holiday parties, a number of cars do not lag behind in the fashion department. In fact, vehicles in some parts of the world have been transformed drastically, and quirky, by their owners for personal artistic expression. They are called art cars.

According to [eccentricamerica.com](http://eccentricamerica.com), an art car is a vehicle whose appearance is modified by owners, sometimes referred to as "Cartists." These art car artists or owners often dress in a matching motif when displaying their cars.

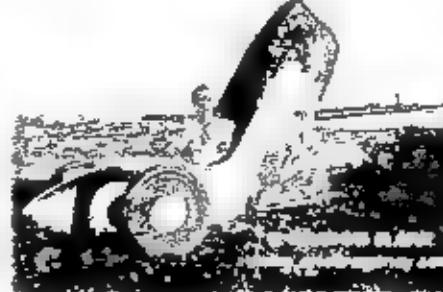
Most car artists are ordinary people with no artistic training, mostly self-

taught and self-funded, though some are mainstream artists like Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol. The two have designed BMW Art Cars and their works have been reflected in racing cars like the BMW V12 LMR.

Art cars are unique in that no art car is "bad" or "wrong," enthusiasts say. They range from simply painted to complete bodies constructed from the ground up. For painted cars, one-shot sign enamel is a favorite due to its bright colors and high durability. Other artists have used everything from professional artists' oil paint to children's poster paint.



A SCI-FI ART CAR



A SHOE ART CAR

Here are some of the samples of art cars which drew crowds in many car shows, according to art car enthusiasts:

The "Ambulance to the Future," by Peter Lochren, has an alien recovering in an oxygen chamber on the roof. Its sides are painted with underwater, robotic alien scenes, and he and his co-pilot always wear matching protective gear.

Artist Jan Elftmann saved over

20,000 corks while working as a waitress to make her "Cork Truck." She has a dress to match. "Danger," by Rev. Charles Linville (and his dog) is covered with everything that is bad for anyone—from hazardous industrial equipment to red meat.

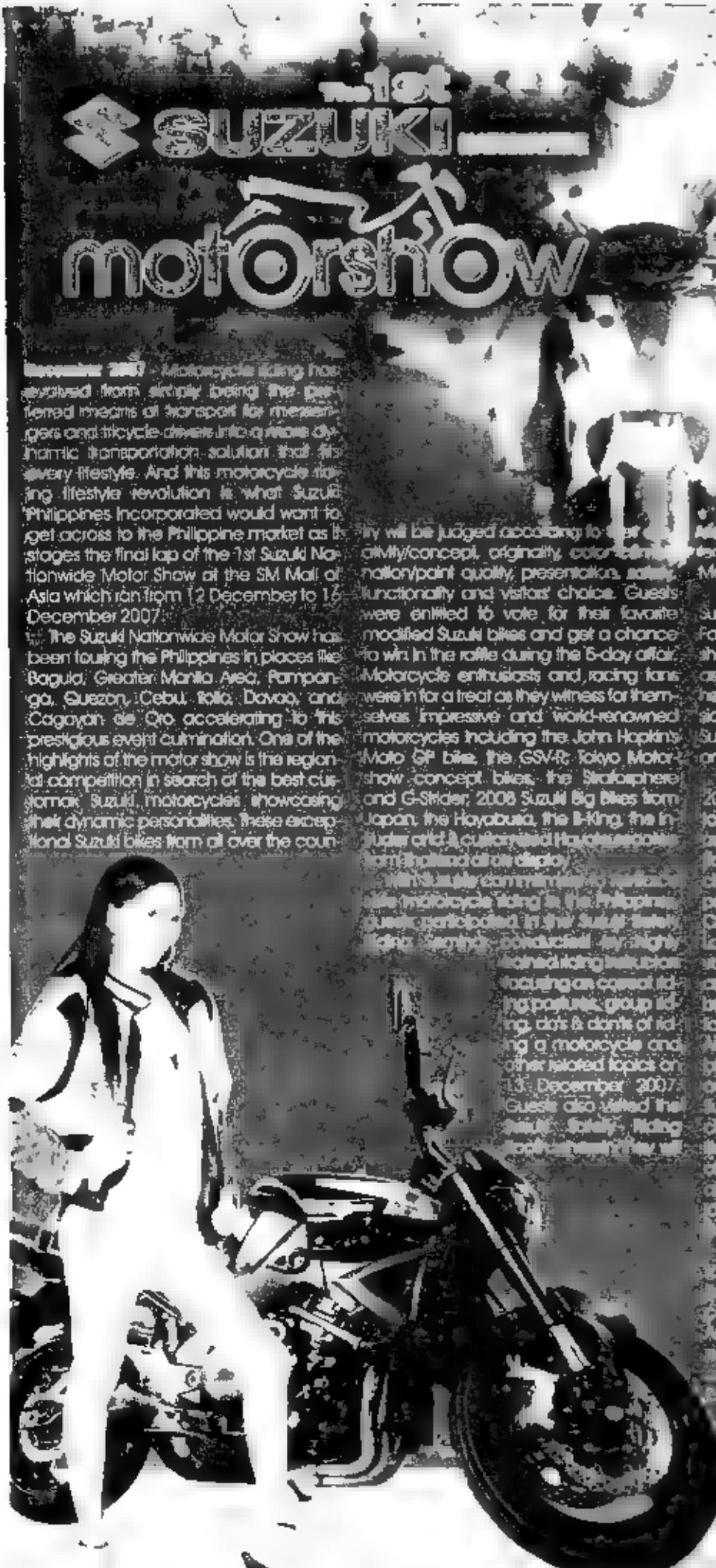
Some cars simply reflect their owner's quirky personalities. The "Graffiti Beamer" by Marilyn Dreampiece, invites you to play on her car that is cov-

ered with interactive musical toys. The "Duke," by Rick McKinney, transformed an old 1970s car, with antique trunks, a typewriter (reflecting his career as a writer) and tons of beads.

The art car community became more cohesive in the 1990s, on the spur of movies and books with a wide underground following. The art car craze is common in the United States, even art car shows. The culture was once strongest throughout Texas and the Southeast but now it extends throughout the United States. Art car events can now be found in many major cities as well as in small country towns.

In Canada, art cars are popular in British Columbia and also in the western Canadian plains.

REFERENCES: [HTTP://WWW.ECCENTRICAMERICA.COM](http://WWW.ECCENTRICAMERICA.COM), [WWW.ARTCAR.COM](http://WWW.ARTCAR.COM)



## Motorcycle lifestyle goes full throttle at the final lap of the

## 1st Suzuki Nationwide Motorshow

The Suzuki Nationwide Motor Show has been touring the Philippines in places like Baguio, Greater Manila Area, Pampanga, Quezon, Cebu, Iloilo, Davao, and Cagayan de Oro accelerating to this prestigious event culmination.



Participants on safety riding along with a call, vocal chords and show off their singing section of safety riding gears courtesy of experts in the Suzuki Extreme Magic Motor Show.

Emphasizing on diversity and style of life, the 1st Suzuki Nationwide Motor Show will showcase the Suzuki apparel as well as Suzuki motorcycle that will let you experience Motoworld motorcycle riding gears enhance the road as never before.

Guests were entitled to vote for their favorite modified Suzuki bikes and get a chance to win in the raffle during the 6-day official

Motorcycle enthusiasts and racing fans were in for a treat as they witness for themselves impressive and world-renowned motorcycles including the John Hopkins

Moto GP bike, the GSXR, Tokyo Motor Show concept bikes, the Shafosphere and G-Skider, 2008 Suzuki Big Bikes from Japan, the Hayabusa, the I-king, the Intruder and a customised Hayabusa.

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Motorcycle enthusiasts and racing fans were in for a treat as they witness

# Otto completes purchase of stake in Galoc field

By Abigail L. Ho

AUSTRALIA-BASED OTTO ENERGY Ltd. has completed its purchase of an 18.28-percent stake in the Galoc production field covered by Service Contract 14C off Northwest Palawan.

In a disclosure to the Australian Stock Exchange, Otto chief executive Alex Parks said the company was now one of the stakeholders in the SC 14C-covered Galoc petroleum field, following the completion of its acquisition of Team Oil Ltd. and Cape Energy Philippines SA.

Cape Philippines and Team Oil each owned 15.69 percent of SC 14C operator Galoc Production Co.

(GPC), with a subsidiary of the Vitol Group owning the remaining 68.62 percent.

The combined shares of Cape Philippines and Team Oil effectively gave Otto an 18.28-percent share in the service contract.

GPC owns 58.29 percent of SC 14C. Australian firm Nido Petroleum Ltd. is the second biggest shareholder with a 22.28-percent stake.

Payment for the SC 14C stake came from a two-tranche shares placement worth A\$67.8 million (\$61.2 million).

Of this total, A\$62 million (\$57.2 million) went straight into the SC 14C stake acquisition, including all the fees associated with the deal.

The A\$67.8 million will be raised via placing 226 million new shares at a price of 30 Australian cents a share.

"Otto is very pleased with the transaction. The revenues from Galoc's oil production will fund Otto's exciting exploration programs, which could deliver significant oil and gas discoveries in Otto's worldwide acreage in the second half of 2008 and 2009," Parks said.

Otto expects to earn net

revenues of between \$30 million and \$45 million from the Galoc oil field in 2008, enough to bolster its working capital requirements in the next few years.

Parks earlier said that the company's "conservative" estimate of its share from the Galoc proceeds in 2008 was around \$30 million, in line with the research assumptions of financial services firm Euroz.

This was based on an average oil price of around \$60 a barrel, he said.

"On current oil prices, Otto's net revenue in 2008 could be as much as \$45 million from the Galoc proceeds alone," he related.

"We expect similar revenue in 2009 as production will be over four quarters instead of the three in 2008. We expect revenues to drop off a little in 2010, unless a further development well is added to the field. So we have a reasonable cash flow profile going forward," he added.

He added that the company's cash flow and future working capital requirements would be supplemented by proceeds from expected gas production in Turkey starting late 2008 or early 2009 and possible production from the Calauit oil field in the Northwest Palawan Basin in 2009.

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Candaba Golf	500,000	500,000	500,000		
Canyon Woods	500,000	500,000	500,000		
Club Filipino	100,000	100,000	100,000		
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Eastridge A/B*	200,000	200,000	200,000		
Forest Hills A/B/C*	90,000	90,000	90,000		
Julius Gold A	500,000	500,000	500,000		
Manila Golf Corporate	200,000	200,000	200,000		
Manila Golf Individual	500,000	500,000	500,000		
Manila Polo	500,000	500,000	500,000		
Manila Southwoods A/B*	300,000	300,000	300,000		
Manila Sports Club A/B*	200,000	200,000	200,000		
Manila Yacht Club Ind.	200,000	200,000	200,000		
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Mimosa CWC A/C/S*	200,000	200,000	200,000		
ML Makati A	100,000	100,000	100,000		
Orchard A/B/C**	100,000	100,000	100,000		
Quezon City Sports Club	100,000	100,000	100,000		
Riverside Golf A/B/C*	100,000	100,000	100,000		
Rockwell Leisure Club	100,000	100,000	100,000		
Roxas Tagaytay CC	60,000	60,000	60,000		
Shawwood A/B/C**	70,000	70,000	70,000		
Splendido Taal	50,000	50,000	50,000		
Sta. Elena Gold A/B*	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000		
The Palms Country Club	500,000	500,000	500,000		
Tagaytay Country Club	500,000	500,000	500,000		
Tagaytay Highlands	500,000	500,000	500,000		
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Valle Verde Ind.	50,000	50,000	50,000		
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"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

2 Timothy 4:7

### Catalina Remedios Mendoza vda. de La Rosa

peacefully joined her Creator on the 21st of December 2007 at the age of 99.

She will be missed by her children Tito & Lourdes, Doring, Menchito & Gabriel, Joe & Linda, Eddie & Naty. Her grandchildren and great-grandchildren will lovingly keep her memories.

Her remains lie in state at the Loyola Memorial Chapel & Crematorium, Inc. - Sucat. Interment will be on Saturday, December 29, 2007 at the Loyola Memorial Park, Paranaque.

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"...absent from the  
body to be present  
with the Lord."  
2 Corinthians 5:8

## MICHAEL MAGANTI JOSEPH

November 28, 1926 – December 22, 2007

passed away in the peace of our Lord and His Sacraments.

Prayers are requested for his eternal joy.

His bereaved wife is Grace Powell; children and grandchildren are Michael Jr., Josephine and Claire; Steven (†), Shirley, Stephen and Sarene; Mary Grace, Arnold Sr., Arnold, Erica and Zachary Andreasen; Gordon, Corinne, Morgan and Justine; Christian, Kathleen, Alexandra and Christian Jr., Mark; Kathleen, Carlos, Matteo and Pio David. His surviving sibling is Susana Santamaria.

His cremated remains will be at Capilla del Señor, Sanctuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park on December 26 and 27, 2007. A Requiem Mass will be at 3:30 p.m., Thursday, December 27, 2007.

Interment will follow at the Church crypt.

Please omit flowers. A donation to the Foundation of Our Lady of Peace Mission, Inc. will be appreciated.

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(PDI - December 14, 19 & 26, 2007)

#### Death Notice

##### NARCISO S. SAN JUAN

Died peacefully  
on December 22, 2007  
at the age of 75  
His body lies in state  
at # 8 Flores St.,  
Meralco Village, Brgy.  
Marilao Bulacan.  
Interment will be  
today, December 26  
at Marilao Memorial  
Park at 2:00 p.m.

## FR. JOHN E. CHAMBERS, S.J.

was called home to the Lord on Monday, 24 December 2007

Wake: Oratory of St. Ignatius at Loyola House of Studies, Ateneo de Manila University Campus, Loyola Heights, Q.C.  
Daily Mass at 8:00 P.M.

Funeral Mass: at 2:30 P.M. on Friday, 28 December  
in the Oratory of St. Ignatius, Loyola House of Studies.

Interment: Sacred Heart Novitiate Cemetery, Novaliches, Q.C., immediately after the Funeral Mass.

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE REPOSE OF HIS SOUL.



**SPORTING** an upscale design, the all-new CR-V's double layer grille implies new trend, great esthetics and luxurious ambience.



**THE ALL-NEW**  
Outlander is  
fitted with  
auto-leveling  
high intensity  
discharge  
headlamps  
that does not  
only look cool  
but provides  
excellent  
visibility when  
driving at  
night.



# Sexy toughies

Text and photos by Charles E. Buban

**A** COUPLE OF WEEKS BACK, this writer was able to drive two of the more popular rides in the market today, Honda's third generation CR-V and Mitsubishi's second generation Outlander.

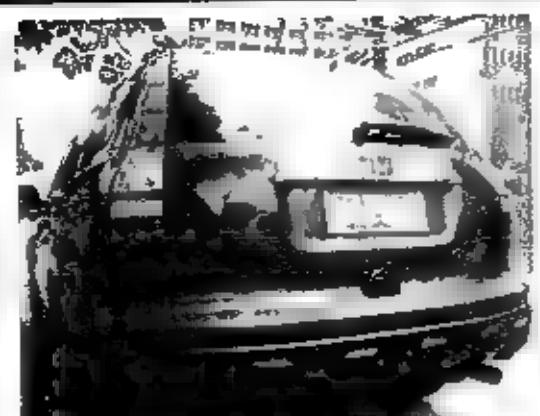
Being crossovers, both offer the best of both worlds, the cargo-carrying size of a compact sport utility vehicle (SUV) and handling of a midsize sedan.

Well, one could also add the four-wheel-drive capability, which both offer (at least in the top variant of the CR-V).

Being latest editions, both models were given stunning new designs, which is most evident in the all-new CR-V.

## One of the strongest

As one of the strongest players in the hotly contested compact SUV segment, Honda decided that the next iteration of its top selling CR-V should be one that is devastatingly



THE ALL-NEW CR-V uses a compact platform that features safety-enhancing technology.

good-looking as well as well-built.

The third generation CR-V indeed, adhered closely to such principles with a completely revamped body structure (for example, the ungainly spare tire is now found under the cargo area giving the all-new CR-V cleaner silhouette as well as making it shorter by 7.9 cm).

Sporting a new double grille design,

scoop-like front bumper and a side profile with an arched window shape accent, the all-new CR-V gives off a distinctive and upscale presence.

Thus writer was assigned a 2.0 automatic, the two-wheel-drive version of the all-new CR-V, which is P200,000 less expensive as well and 20 horsepower short than the P1,450 million, 2.4-liter, 4WD variant.

## Endearing qualities

Notwithstanding, the variant that this writer got still exhibited several endearing qualities that pervade in three available variants of the all-new CR-V.

On the road, the all-new CR-V is steady and very quiet, which could be attributed to the fact that this vehicle has an even more sophisticated interior and improved chassis design.

It now has a lower center of gravity (reduced by 3.5 cm), wider stance (increased by 3.0 cm) and a number of changes to steering and suspension geometry to instill more driver confidence.



FOR A MORE spirited drive, the all-new Outlander is equipped with a paddle shift behind the steering wheel.



YES, that's a Rockford Fosgate sound system fitted inside the all-new Outlander.

THE ALL-NEW Outlander's hatch offers two opening options as well as huge cargo space.

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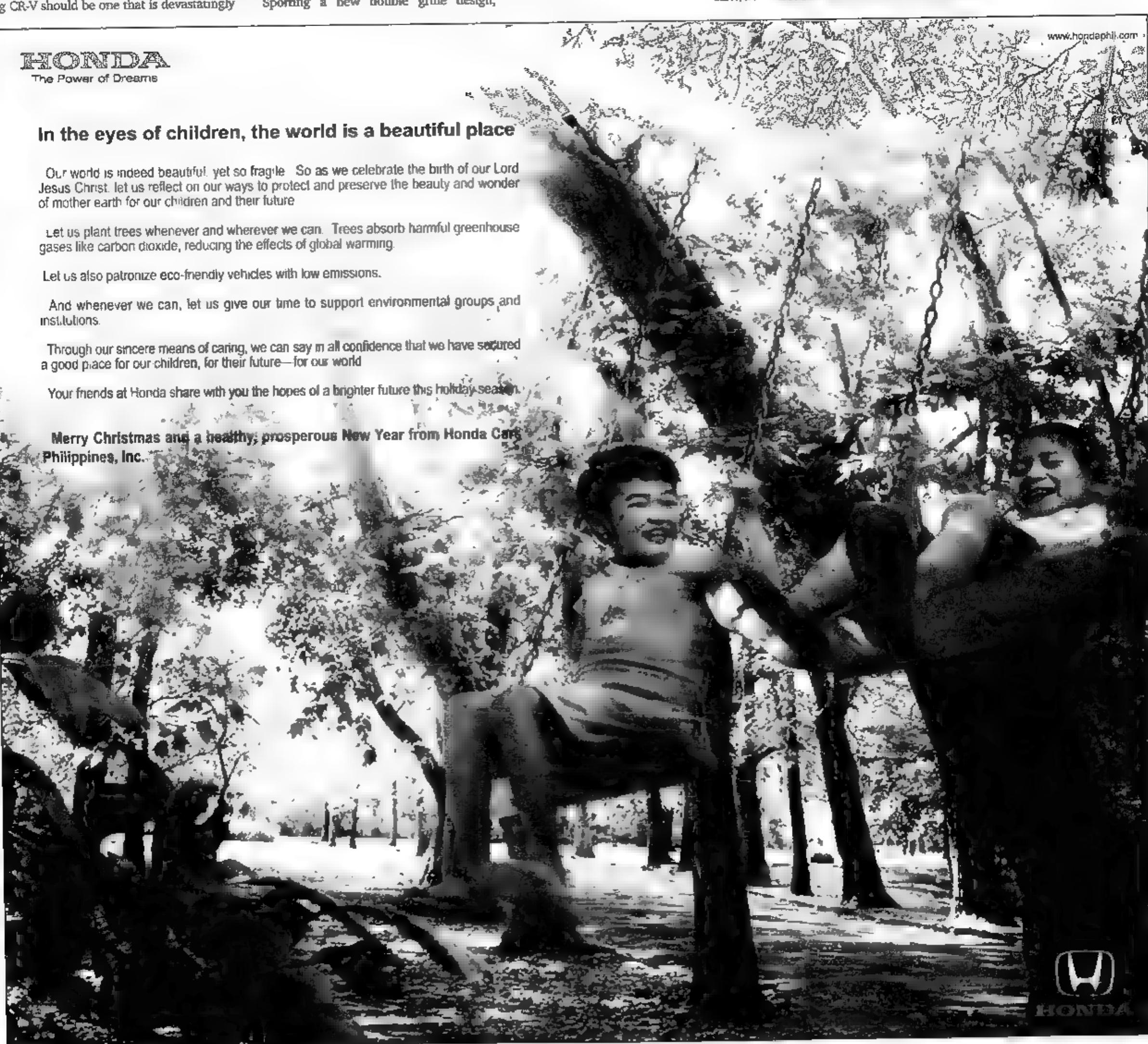
Let us also patronize eco-friendly vehicles with low emissions.

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Your friends at Honda share with you the hopes of a brighter future this holiday season.

Merry Christmas and a healthy, prosperous New Year from Honda Cars Philippines, Inc.



HONDA



# LIFESTYLE

Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso

Website: [www.inquirer.net/lifestyle](http://www.inquirer.net/lifestyle)

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## 2007 Rewind

In our last issue for 2007, 2bU! hits the rewind button to look back at the year that was. Here are the newsmakers, the music, the athletes, the gadgets and the fashion that rocked your 2007



### Noisemakers and scene-stealers

By Niño Mark M. Sablan  
2bU! Correspondent

FROM NEWCOMERS WHO ACHIEVED great career success to teeners with attached scandals to their names, from overnight sensations to plain attention-deprived scene-stealers, here is a list of names that made deafening noise in 2007

#### Scene-stealers

The Spice Girls. Everyone was delighted to hear that Posh, Ginger, Scary, Sporty and Baby were reuniting. So when they actually did and embarked on a world tour, tickets were sold out in no time at all. One of the biggest girl groups ever, the Spice Girls are currently touring the world, performing their greatest hits and their latest single called "Headlines."

Sanjaya Malakar. While this "American Idol" contestant raked in a lot of fans and votes, he received a lot of criticism from the show's judges and from viewers around the world as well. But whether he was loved or hated for his ever-changing hairstyles, sexual preference or his take on songs like "Bathwater" by No Doubt and "Waiting on the World to Change" by John Mayer, there is no denying that Sanjaya is one of AI's most unforgettable contestants.

Teri Hatcher. It's not the fact that her "Desperate Housewives" character, Susan Mayer, always gets the best looking men in the show. What made her—or her character—controversial this year was the racial slur she said: "Okay, before we go any further, can I check those diplomas? Because I would just like to make sure that they're not from some med school in the Philippines."

Outraged Filipinos from all over the world demanded an apology. The TV network eventually backed down, issuing a statement of regret.

Isaiah Washington. Known as Dr. Preston Burke in the hit TV series "Grey's Anatomy," the actor used a homophobic insult turned at co-star TR. Knight on the show's set. He was sent to attend counseling, and then was dropped from the show. Good riddance.

Anna Nicole Smith. The former Guess and Playboy model, who died from an acci-

NOISEMAKERS/C3



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## LIFESTYLE



Newcomers and scandal subjects, overnight sensations and authentic talents—these are the people who hit the headlines



KATHERINE Heigl



ZAC Efron

## Noisemakers...

From page C1

dental overdose, opened a floodgate of questions and mysteries with her passing. Who is the real father of her daughter Dannielynn? Was she really legally married to her personal attorney, Howard K. Stern? Larry Burkhead was eventually proven to be the biological dad, but even he wasn't spared from intrigues. Questions about his sexual preference surfaced and some people started doubting his parental capabilities. Smith's psychiatrist is also being investigated for reportedly over-prescribing pills.

**Chris Benoit.** Not only did the wrestler, 40, commit suicide in June 24, he also murdered his wife and his 7 year-old son before taking his own life. There are speculations that he was over-prescribed testosterone, but authorities are still investigating the matter.

## Invasion of the young ones

**Shia LaBeouf.** After starring in "Disturbia" and "Transformers," this heartthrob is ready for his next blockbuster film, the new Indiana Jones movie together with Harrison Ford. With comparisons to superstar Tom Hanks already being made about this promising actor, you just know that he'll be around for quite a while.

**Vanessa Hudgens.** This 18-year-old singer-actress made waves when she starred in the tween hit movie "High School Musical" and its sequel. When her nude pictures surfaced on the Internet, however, fans were shocked and the scandal proved to be a setback for the young actress. She eventually apologized and is reportedly still included in the Disney movie's third installment.

**Zac Efron.** He's got the complete package—wonderful personality, good looks, undeniable charm—and singing and acting capabilities as well! The "High School Musical" and "Hairspray" star is just 20, so expect him to make a lot of people swoon for a very long time.

**Rihanna.** This Barbadian beauty got popular in 2007 because of two things. First is her single, "Umbrella," the extremely catchy song originally intended for Mary J. Blige, which got everyone singing "ella, ella, eh, eh, eh" and was also covered by artists such as Mandy Moore and My Chemical Romance. Second is her sharp and short haircut, which everyone seems to be sporting nowadays.

**Hayden Panettiere.** Not only did this sweet-toning blonde finally jumpstart a successful career through the hit show "Heroes," she also became a real-life superhero when she helped save a school of dolphins from slaughter in dangerous Japanese waters. And if those weren't enough, she is also rumored to be dating "Heroes" co-star Milo Ventimiglia, everyone's current crush.

## The big disappointments

**Britney Spears.** After shaving off all her hair in a salon in California in February, the pop star attracted the paparazzi by checking in and out of rehab, provisionally losing custody of her sons and then performing a very boring, disappointing and much-criticized number at the MTV Video Music Awards.

**Jamie Lynn Spears.** Britney's younger sis is proving that she can also be as controversial, with her recent revelation that she is pregnant at 16. The father is 18-year-old boyfriend, Casey Aldridge. In a tell-all interview with OK! Magazine, she says, "It was a shock for both of us, so unexpected. I was in complete and total shock and so was he. I can't say it was something I was planning to do right now, but now that it's in my lap and that it's something I have to deal with, definitely I'm looking forward to being the best mom I can be."

**Amy Winehouse.** Despite finding great career success in America and true love with

hubbie Blake Civil-Fielder, the "Rehab" singer's reputation continued to slide with a slew of cancelled performances, alcohol and drug issues, and disturbing photos of herself all bloodied, splashed on the pages of the British press.

## The achievers

**Chris Daughtry.** Once again proving that you don't need to win the top spot in a contest just to be successful, the bald rocker with the powerful voice overshadowed his "American Idol" batchmates by making it big in 2007 with the single "Home." So far, the band has won three awards in the American Music Awards and has recently nabbed four Grammy nominations.

**Beyoncé.** The extremely talented singer-songwriter dominated the charts in 2007 with the re-release of her triple-platinum and Grammy-nominated album, "B'Day." In fact, fans still can't stop themselves from suddenly singing "to the left, to the left," from the song "Irreplaceable." Filipinos love her even more for including the Philippines in her world tour.

**Katherine Heigl.** With the box office hit "Knocked Up" and her Emmy-winning portrayal of Dr. Isabel "Izzie" Stevens on "Grey's Anatomy," this blonde stunner's moment in the spotlight has clearly arrived.

**Lauren "LC" Conrad.** As the "star" of the reality-based TV show "The Hills" on MTV, this "Teen Vogue" intern won over fans with her charm, relatable social life, interesting love life and very enviable wardrobe. While the latest season has just ended, a new one is forthcoming, which will follow Lauren as she goes to Paris for work with officemate and friend Whitney.

## Problematic beauties

**Rachel Smith.** The 2007 Miss Universe hopeful will forever be remembered by many as the contestant who fell flat on her ass during the long gown competition. She was also booed during the National Costume competition and the question-and-answer portion, in part over political issues between the US and Mexico, where the pageant was held.

**Lauren Caitlin Upton.** This 2007 Miss Teen USA hopeful's claim to infamy was her nonsensical and circitous answer when asked why a fifth of Americans couldn't seem to locate the US on the world map. Apart from reaching some four million viewers who tuned during the contest, the embarrassing Q&A is also on YouTube, continuously checked out by many more people.

## Proud to be Pinoy

**Marc Nelson and Rovilson Fernandez.** The athletic duo representing the Philippines in "The Amazing Race Asia 2" is still leading in the race the last time we checked. That is a major accomplishment, considering how the Philippine representatives last year got booted out in the first few episodes. Who knows, they might even bring home the bacon—while showing the rest of the world our unique Pinoy grit, humor and charm.

**Charice Pempengco.** Look how far this "Little Big Star" third placer has come. Last June, she flew to Sweden to record for Ten Songs Productions, a record company that was impressed with Charice's "Little Big Star" performances posted on YouTube. After belt ing out a remarkable song number in a Korean TV show, she also got the attention of Ellen DeGeneres, who recently had her appear and perform on her own talk show. That appearance garnered her two ovations from the obviously amazed crowd. Go, girl!

## From nobodies to near-somebodies

**Esmeralda Denter.** If the name doesn't ring a bell, maybe her YouTube videos of covers will. The Dutch singer uploaded her impressive versions of songs such as "Weak" by SWV and "If I Ain't Got You" by Alicia Keys online and instantly got herself millions of fans (just check out her hits), including Oprah Winfrey, who had the teen guest on her talk show, and Justin Timberlake, who signed the wannabe under his record label.

**Chris Crocker.** After Britney Spears' disappointing and disastrous MTV VMA performance, Britney fan Chris made a tear-filled video pleading to everyone to "leave Britney alone." He posted the soggy rant on YouTube, and the result—laughable and entertaining—attracted millions of hits, lots of media exposure, remixes, and even spoofs from people like actor Seth Green. Chris has other videos where he's acting, but he claims his "Leave Britney Alone" video is the only one where he's not.

E-mail the author at ninomarkisablan@yahoo.com



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MARC Nelson and Rovilson Fernandez



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## Highs, lows and sensations

By Jasmine W. Payo  
Sports Reporter

**W**HEN FILIPINO CHESS sensation Wesley So recently emerged as the seventh youngest Grandmaster in the world, the feat turned out to be a fitting highlight in a year when young athletes dominated the sports headlines.

So, a high-school sophomore remarkably earned the coveted Grandmaster title at 14 years old, one month and 28 days.

"I'm very happy. This is already a beautiful Christmas gift for me," said So, who also holds the distinction of being the country's youngest chess Olympian at 12.

Just a week later, swimmer Miguel Molina made waves by winning the Most Valuable Player plum in the 24th Southeast Asian Games after a dominating pool performance.

The 23-year-old Molina captured four gold medals by ruling the 200-meter and 400-meter individual medley, the 200-meter breaststroke and the 4x100 medley relay.

Also making a big splash were Molina's fellow United States-trained Filipino swimmers.

Daniel Coakley, the 17-year-old great grandson of two-time bronze medalist Teofilo Yldefonso, scooped a gold by shattering the SEA Games' 50-meter freestyle record.

Nineteen-year-old JB Walsh also came up with a record-breaking performance in the 200-meter butterfly, while another teen, 18-year-old Ryan Arabejo, plucked two golds in the 200-meter backstroke and 1500-meter freestyle.

"We know that we can compete in the world level," Philippine Amateur Swimming Association president Mark Joseph said of the four swimmers, who all qualified to compete in the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

### Top marksmen

The Philippine team that competed at the 2007 Australasia Practical Shooting Championships in Pattaya, Thailand this month also gave Filipinos a big reason to celebrate.

The team captured the overall Open Team Division title leaving Australia in second place and Czech Republic in third. The Philippines' Jeufro "Jag" Lejano, who was the modified division champion of the 2005 World Shoot in Ecuador, captured the overall open division title, besting 600 marksmen from different parts of the globe.

Four other Pinoys placed high on the list of top marksmen: Stephen Hinojales was fourth, Jerome Morales was fifth, Blairwin Ortega was ninth and Carlos Panganiban was tenth.

Morales also bagged the top



TEEN chess sensation Wesley So

RYAN JIM

place of the Open Division, while the 19-year-old Ortega was the big winner for the Australasia Junior category.

### Varsity action

Most basketball-loving Pinoys, of course, got glued to varsity action as school pride ran high during the UAAP and NCAA basketball competitions.

Drama unfolded in many forms this UAAP season, yet it was the La Salle Green Archers that came out vindicated in the final buzzer.

The Green Archers rebounded from a scandal with a championship powered by a tested crew led by TY Tang, Cholo Villanueva, JV Casio and Rico Maierhofer.

"It was a roller-coaster season for us," said coach Franz Pumaren of his Archers, who rose from a one-year suspension resulting from a harrowing eligibility case. "Experience was glaringly in our favor (during the Finals). My players are veterans of many wars."

Pumaren, however, celebrated at the expense of his younger brother Dindo's University of the East Red Warriors.

"If only we can slice the trophy, I think the UE Red Warriors deserve the other half," said Pumaren.

Indeed, the squad that looked poised to become destiny's darling faltered as the Warriors struggled in the Finals after an amazing 14-0 win-loss record in the elimination round.

But the Green Archers also had to deal with their fiercest rival, the Ateneo Blue Eagles, in rare five-game saga before bagging thus year's championship.

Despite winning only twice against their traditional foes, the Green Archers sewed up the crucial wins to advance to the Finals.

"This is the only time that two is greater than three," said Franz. "They beat us three times, but we beat them when it counted the most."

Morales also bagged the top

### Game fixing

Over at the NCAA, the San Beda Red Lions dominated for the second straight year by sweeping the Letran Knights in the championship round.

Ogie Menor, 6-foot-8 Nigerian Sam Ikwe and Pong Escobal starred anew for the Red Lions, who lost only once—by just by a single point—during the entire season.

Yet it was the league's controversies that grabbed more attention with the arrest of a star player for alleged game-fixing topping them all.

St. Benilde guard Paolo Orbeta got arrested by the National Bureau of Investigation in an entrapment operation along with three other suspects last August.

The league, however, maintained it was an isolated case. "It's an eye-opener for the NCAA. The incident was just a private deal between two people that had gone sour," said St. Benilde athletic director Henry Atayde.

The Philippine team, though, made up for any shortcomings in the basketball scene by ending the year with a golden performance in the SEA Games. Led by Fil-American Gabe Norwood, the RP quintet moved the six-nation field by an average of 40 points.

### Pet sport

In the Pinoys' other pet sport, boxing, a bevy of stars turned up led by national icon Manny Pacquiao.

The 29-year-old "People's Champion" again captured the hearts of a battered nation by downing celebrated Mexican fighters Jorge Solis and Marco Antonio Barrera this year.

Capturing the enthusiasts' interest as well were mini-flyweight Florante Condes and flyweight Nonito Donaire, two underdog Filipino boxers who clinched world championships—less than 24 hours apart—in separate bouts in Indonesia and the United States in one rousing weekend.

A number of young boxers also stood out like Rey "Boom Boom" Bautista and AJ "Bezooka" Banal for similarly hurling Mexican opponents.

Many other national athletes provided inspiring moments amid the Philippines' dismal sixth-place finish and controversial boxing walkout in the SEA Games, with the valiant efforts of flamboyant tennis ace Cecil Mamuit; archer Amaya Paz; and other standouts from softball, fencing, athletics, cycling, billiards, dance sport, rowing, diving, judo, taekwondo, duathlon and wushu.

And as swimming's Mark Joseph succinctly noted: "This just goes to show that the Filipino does not lack the genetics to succeed."

MIGUEL Molina swims his way to victory.

Young athletes dominated the sports headlines this year



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PINOY pride in Pattaya, Thailand: Stephen Hinojales, Blairwin Ortega, Jerome Morales and Jeufro Lejano

THE YEAR IN MUSIC

# Dream and nightmare reunions, a free album and

By Christian Brazil Bautista  
2bUI Correspondent

**T**O GET A SENSE OF MUSIC IN 2007, you need not look further than Top 40 radio, which, in this country, translates to practically every radio station playlist (yes, even those that ask if it's necessary to memorize).

In the near future, when a "Music of 2007" category pops up in Jeopardy!, it would probably read like a laundry list of hits from acts such as Rihanna, Justin Timberlake, Fall Out Boy and Akon. But really, there's more to the music scene, since this is the year that hell froze over and albums came for free.

#### Earth-shattering

Just like Eagles did early on, and the Pixies quite recently, a number of influentia-

This is  
the year  
that hell  
froze  
over  
and  
albums  
came  
for free



SPICE Girls

bands dusted off their instruments for dream reunions.

The biggest of the year, and perhaps the most earth-shattering, was the reformation of rock gods Led Zeppelin. The band, which now has Jason Bonham, the son of long-time drummer John Bonham, on the skins, recently played their first concert in 27 years in London's O2 Arena. Page, Plant, Jones and Bonham left their fans one message at the end of night: "We were the best, and still are."

It is still unclear whether the one-night-only show would translate to a full-blown tour. There are encouraging signs, though, with rumors of the band in talks to play at London's Wembley Stadium and at New York's Madison Square Garden. The latter was the site of their concert film "The Song Remains The Same."

Another group that got back together was

The Police, which reunited early in the year in celebration of their 30th anniversary. The group unveiled their reformation by playing at this year's Grammy Awards. They played "Roxanne," their first hit single in the States.

The Police opened their reunion tour, their first since 1984, in May in Vancouver. They will swing by Southeast Asia on Feb. 4, 2008 to play a show in Singapore. Oh, and by the way, Van Halen and Genesis are also back together.

Sadly, the reunion bug also bit The Backstreet Boys, Take That and the Spice Girls. Now we only need to wait for the Rolling Stones to break up so we can say we've seen everything.

#### Seminal band

Radiohead recently released its seventh studio album "In Rainbows." The price? Whatever you feel like paying.

The seminal Oxford-based band, which has scored hits with its past three albums—"Kid A," "Amnesiac" and "Hail to the Thief"—have left it to fans to decide how much the new album is worth. The 10-track album, available since mid-October on the band's website, can be obtained free of charge. A CD version of the album was released in early December.

## The 2007

# Playing mu

By Jayvee Fernandez  
Contributor

**M**ICROSOFT IS A LAUGHING STOCK WITH Windows Vista, but is marking history with its Halo 3 sales. The XBOX 360 releases great new games, while the Wii experiences an influx of crappy games during the latter part of 2007.

Apple consumers are bipolar: raving yet ranting with the iPhone release, while the Mac fanboys give status quo reactions to Macintosh OS X Leopard. The Internet is still democratic, with a huge rise in blogs and "social networking" services. Yet the Internet is also not democratic as people realize that Google can flip your site's PageRank with a push of a button.

Google is the next Microsoft. Linx is the new Macintosh. Now, everybody wants an Asus eee laptop for P17,000.

With core competencies shifting, the good guys are becoming the evil empire and the cult is going mainstream: this sums up technology in 2007. Let's do this!

#### Ask what you can do for Vista!

Did you know that it takes 48,167 days and 23 hours to burn a CD on Windows Vista? I kid you not. But by using third-party applications, it should only take you 15 minutes.

Windows Vista has been cited by numerous magazines as a horrendous "downgrade" from the previous version. Not only is it less stable, it renders a great number of your peripherals incompatible. If you're running Vista, I suggest you "upgrade" to Windows XP. It's much more stable and it hoggs less of your system's resources.

I'm even going to go as far as saying that the bootleg version you find in your flea market is way better, as you can install it an unlimited number of times. Certain versions of Vista only allow you to install the thing less than three times. Innovation? Nah.

The truth is, you can only innovate so much. Let's take the Nintendo Wii that brought down the house of cards in console gaming for 2006.

The XBOX 360 (and PS3) overtook the Wii in Japan last November. This was mostly due to Halo 3's debut (which raked over \$300 million for Microsoft in the first week), but it also had lots to do with the fact that the Wii game devs have been releasing products that rely too much on the innovative accelerometer enabled Wiimote.

It was fun at one point, but later on you looked rather stupid doing calisthenics with the Wiimote whereas it would have been easier—and more fun—to just press a button, old-school style.

#### When the elite goes mainstream

Seth Godin, well-known marketing evangelist, recalled how he once stepped into Starbucks and found at least five guys with white MacBooks. Five guys.

It's interesting to reflect on how Apple used to position itself as a company that catered to those who dared to be different. But when you find a significant number of people in a coffee shop already using a product that supposedly caters to the "chosen few," then you might have to rethink your marketing strategy.

Which is why Apple has ventured into the realm of consumer electronics, first with the iPod, then with Apple TV and now with the iPhone.

You see, Apple got it right with the iPod, as it was the solution to having to carry your entire music collection in your pocket. No other MP3 player in the year 2000 was able to do this, and Apple was the first to deliver giga-byte-class storage in your pocket.

The iPod revolutionized portable music. The iPhone works the same way. With so many phones being churned out by the big manufacturers—Nokia, HTC, Samsung, you name it—none has come close to actually delivering a user experience that "feels right."

Want proof? Did you know that the iPhone Safari Internet browser holds a 0.1 percent market share of all pages on the Internet? How significant is that? Perspective check: That is actually a lot more than all the Windows Mobile phones' market share put together (which is around 0.06 percent).

The iPhone, which sold 500,000 units on its opening

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# and no shoot-outs



## Rapper duel

A dispute between two rappers that was settled by album sales; don't you just miss the good old days when they would just shoot each other?

Kanye West and 50 Cent faced off in the Billboard charts as their albums—West's "Graduation" and 50 Cent's "Curtis"—occupied the top two spots. In the end, West won the tussle, prompting his rival to back off from his earlier promise of retiring if he got defeated.

Now on shelves: great albums that went under the radar

**Interpol**  
Björn and John  
"Interpol's Block"

is Swedish trio's beaten-down

performance to k-pop is disarming.

Interpol

"Our Love To Admire"

is the fact that Interpol has a

album makes this a good year

music.

**The White Stripes**

"Jack Thump"

is Meg and Jack's best since 2003's

"The Great

"Party"

"Weekend In The City"

**Editors**  
"An End Has A Start"

Post-punk gloom that is addictive.

**Arctic Monkeys**

"Favourite Worst Nightmare"

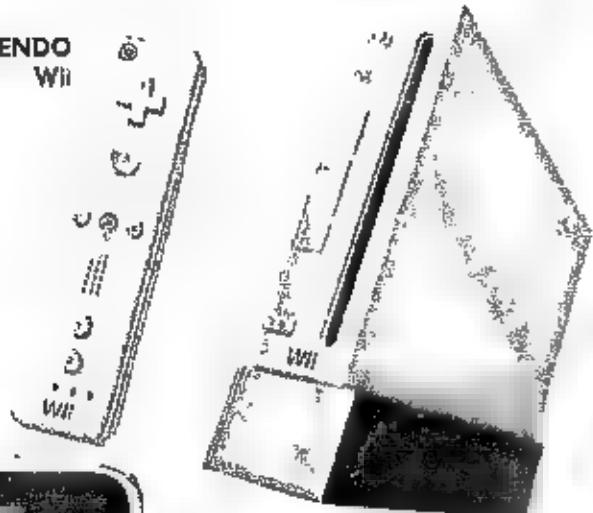
More from these brilliant dudes.

**Not in this list:** The Killers, Britney Spears and Incubus

## Clash of the

# musical chairs

NINTENDO  
Wii



The good guys  
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this sums up  
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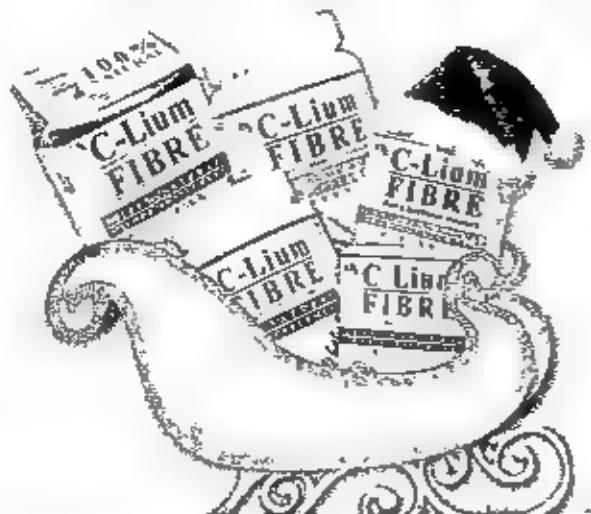
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As a whole, 2007 fashion was slightly more formal than the previous years, with young people favoring more exciting, dressy clothes

## A more adventurous year

By Bianca Consunji  
2bU! Correspondent

**T**HE YOUNG FASHION SCENE WAS decidedly more grown-up in 2007, with more people opting to skip the usual shirts and jeans in favor of more adventurous, dressy clothes.

As a whole, 2007 fashion was slightly more formal than the previous years, flip-flops were no longer must-have pieces, as proven by the diminished lines at Havaianas stores.

Instead, ribboned flats, patent leather heels, wedges and thin gladiator-type sandals took center stage. For the comfort-conscious, Melissa shoes became the fashion must-have for the year.

Weary of the underdressed look that was popular for the last two years, fashion-conscious youth brought out the stops in 2007. This was partly proven by the popularity of tights and stockings, which made a tremendous comeback this year.

While black tights and fishnet stockings were still prevalent, a few brave souls opted for bright shades such as pink, red, and orange. Often worn with high-heeled shoes or Mary Janes, stockings made otherwise drab outfits edgier.

Layering, particularly with vests and polo shirts, was also a key trend. While dresses have become more popular than ever, menswear also prevailed over the local retail scene. Trapeze dresses and basic shifts were everywhere at the start of



the year, but the second half of 2007 saw the influx of more tailored pieces. Vests, pinstripes, and crisp white shirts were made feminine with touches such as ribbons and ruffles. Puffed sleeves, oversized buttons and ruffled collars added a touch of sass to otherwise plain shirts.

In line with the preppy trend, sweater vests and knits were also big in the past year, especially with college guys anduppies. Shirts with tongue-in-cheek messages, while always a staple with high-school and college kids, went mainstream this year.

The disappearance of skinny jeans made thousands of girls around the world breathe a sigh of relief. Unflattering except on a select few, they were replaced with palazzo and cigarette pants.

On the other hand, the return of high waists launched a hundred diets, although the trend wasn't widely embraced.

Accessories such as hats (berets, fedoras, bowler hats), skinny belts, suspenders and ribboned necklaces spruced up the outfits of teens and young adults worldwide, if not always locally. Sequins and beads made outfits glitter, and dark colors ruled the last quarter of the year.

The influence of the '80s was unmistakable in the year's fashion offerings. In-your-face detail and bold color were prevalent in 2007, although there were already glimpses of the '90s (with loose pants and menswear).

As a whole, however, the year showed the integration of the trends of those two decades (such as shift dresses paired with loud stockings), with a few updates here and there.

E-mail the author at [biancaconsunji@yahoo.com](mailto:biancaconsunji@yahoo.com)



SMART dressing in dresses and coats

## The 2007 ...

From page D2

weekend, has already won the browser war against all the other HTCs and XDs out there within barely five months of release, whereas Windows Mobile has been around for more than three years.

That's the iPhone. But what about the Macs? As Windows users are shifting to Macs (PC World magazine has declared the best computer to run Windows... a Macintosh—how crazy is that?), the "chosen few" are looking forward to the dawn of a new "club" of mini laptops.

You might have seen them around—the ASUS branded "eee" notebooks that go from anywhere between P9,000 to P17,000. They run Linux, an open source operating system that brings a different sort of prestige because it's free to use but isn't anything near mainstream. That is, until maybe in the next few months.

With so many people buying these things, tech sites and blogs have been posting Linux 101 crash courses to help users hack their way through the software. All of that, so anyone can blog and podcast from anywhere.

As blogs grow at a crazy geometric number, so do the social networking sites. FaceBook is hot worldwide. Friendster is still

the mainstream site back home. Your online reputation is becoming more valuable to your next employer; yes, HR departments do search for your name on Google.

People forget that setting up blogs and social network profiles have some impact on one's online reputation and identity. Take, for instance, the wildfire spread online of the Malu Fernandez controversy. Nasty, but it can't be helped. These days, your online rep is as good as your real life.

### Some lessons

Three things I learned this year from the technology industry:

1. You can't stay with your core competence forever. At some point, you would have to innovate. This isn't the 50s anymore. Things move just too damn fast.

2. You can't have your business model rely on just one system. Case in point: bloggers were relying on Google's PageRank system to value link selling. When Google screwed up the system by penalizing link sellers, a lot of tier-1 professional bloggers lost a significant amount of income.

3. Microsoft should stop making operating systems and stick to making games.



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Editor Emmie G. Velarde

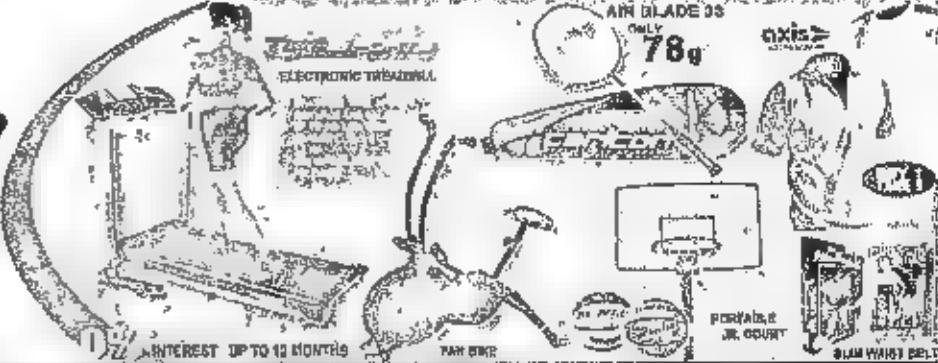
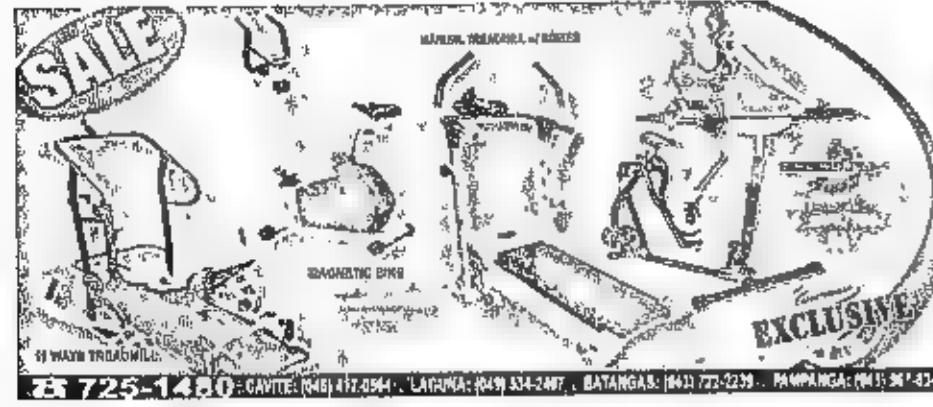
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## Christmas wish for Philippine television

WHAT everybody would want to see is for Philippine television to look upon itself as an apostolate to serve the people, to present everything as a means to get closer to God and not to keep sliding towards hell or evil. The desire to show only what sells or to keep maximizing profit is one form of evil. If local networks could bring themselves to espouse Gospel values in creative ways, then we can truly say local TV is world-class.

Fr. James B. Reuter, S.J.



TAYLOR HICKS thinks Norah Jones has done popular music, especially songwriters and "pure talents," a lot of good.

RYAN LIM

By Pocholo Concepcion

AS A CHILD OF DIVORCED PARENTS, recent Manila visitor Taylor Hicks found solace in music. He fell hard for black artists; getting to watch them in concert convinced him that he should follow their lead.

For 10 years, Hicks toiled as a professional singer, making the rounds of bars and clubs (even parties) around the southeastern states, including those near his hometown, Alabama.

Though he wasn't signed to any label, he already had two albums—"In Your Time" and "Under the Radar"—both self-produced, prior to his self-titled major label (Arista/Sony BMG) debut which came after he became the 2006

## American Idol

Despite worldwide attention following his triumph, Hicks remains grounded and doesn't mind being referred to as the oldest or least likely-looking Idol. What he's most proud of, simply, is being a musician.

How did your parents' divorce affect you?

Any child who goes through a divorce has to find a happy place. For me, music was that happy place. It became my passion and outlet for my feelings.

How did you find the music that you love?

I first heard Sam Cooke and Ray Charles on the radio, in a program called AM Gold.

Was there a conscious effort to emulate these influences?

Yeah, but once you hear all these great artists and musicians, you want to recreate something for yourself. That's when you try to take off and create your own music.

What was the biggest difference between your first two independent albums and the major label debut?

The first two were my music, songs that I've written. The third had other songwriters and producers. That was a great learning experience which helped me become a better recording artist.

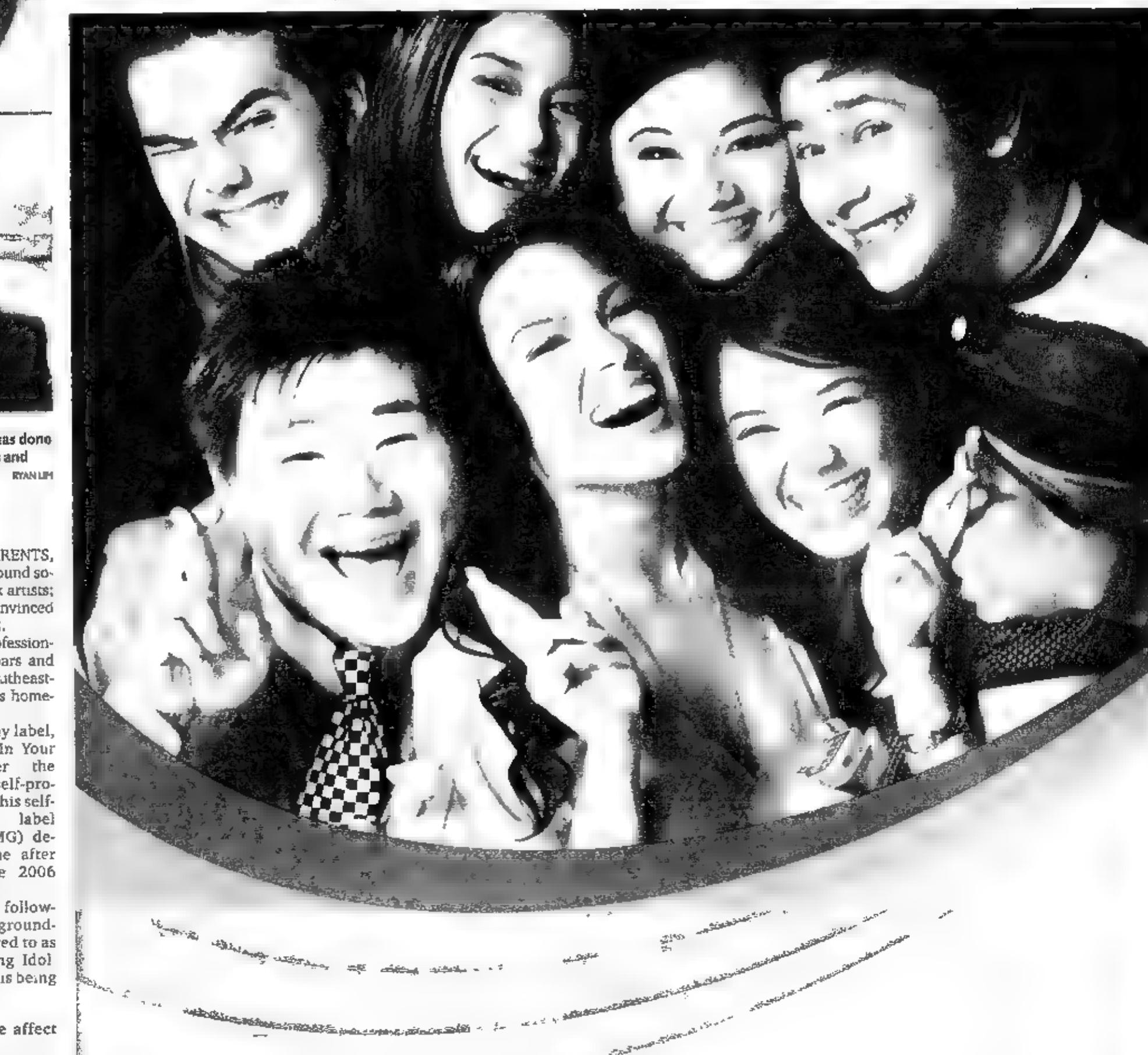
How do you rate the first two albums?

I think the first one definitely needed some work. The second one was the better attempt. And the third was me understanding what it was like to have a bigger production.

You described the third album as organic.

What I tried to accomplish was take some of the organic influences and cross them over with pop sensibilities. I think I got a good shot at it.

What band or solo artist, do you think, has been very influential these past few years?



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**Globe**

## Just happy to play music . . .

From page E1

I think Norah Jones brought us back down to earth commercially with "Don't Know Why." It allowed songwriters and people with pure musical talents to be

heard on radio, as opposed to the more "produced" sounds. For me, personally, it's Ray La Montaigne. He's a great soul singer.

Do you remember watching a concert that changed your life?

I was 6 or 7 when I saw Lionel Richie and Tina Turner in concert. Seeing those two performers, right off the bat, didn't hurt anything.

You look more fashionable now. Do you have a stylist?

I go shopping and comb my hair just like everybody else. But you know what? I take that back, 'cause very little do I comb my hair, although I put gel in it.

Have you ever thought of dyeing your salt-and-pepper hair?

No, I would be scared to [do that] because nobody would know who I am.

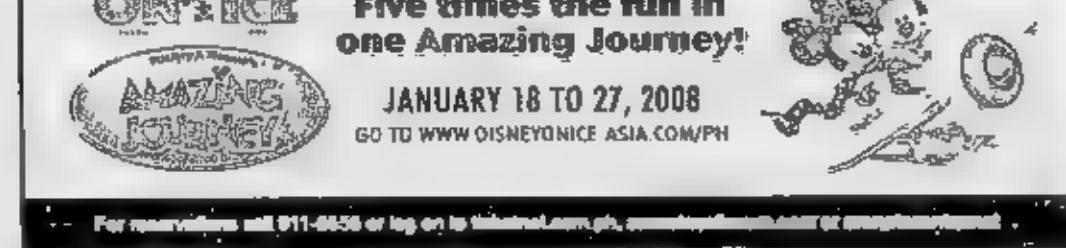
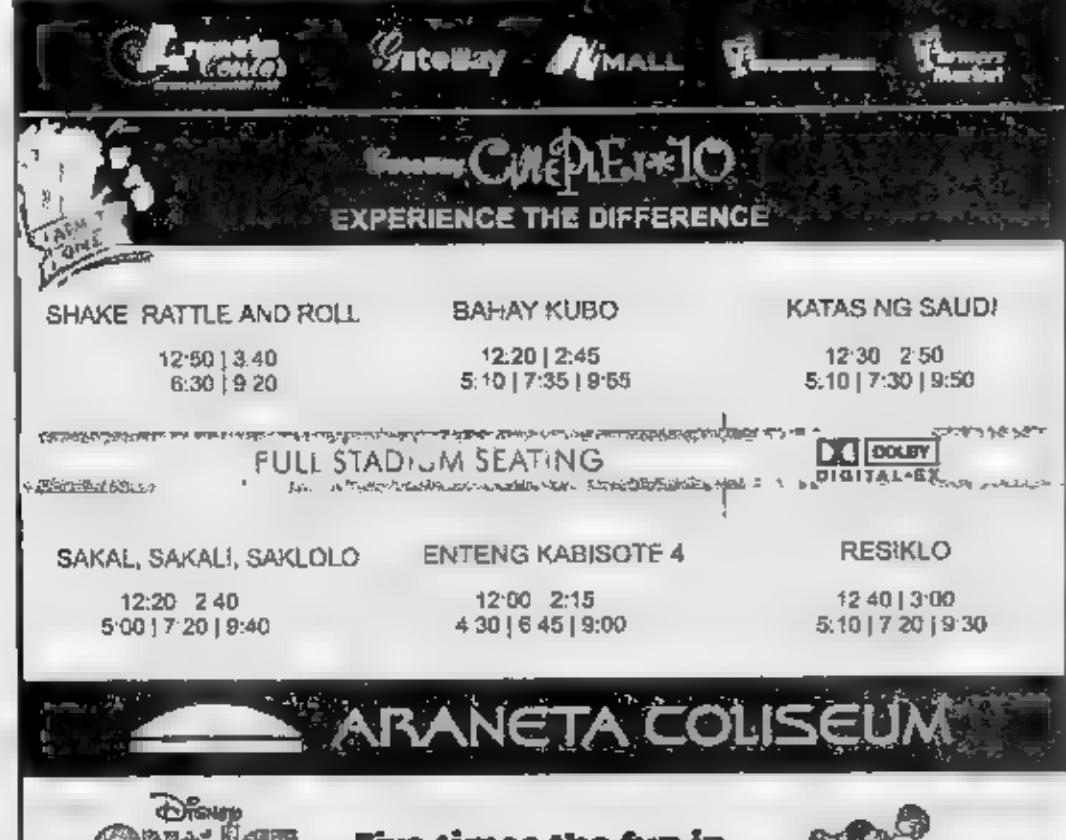
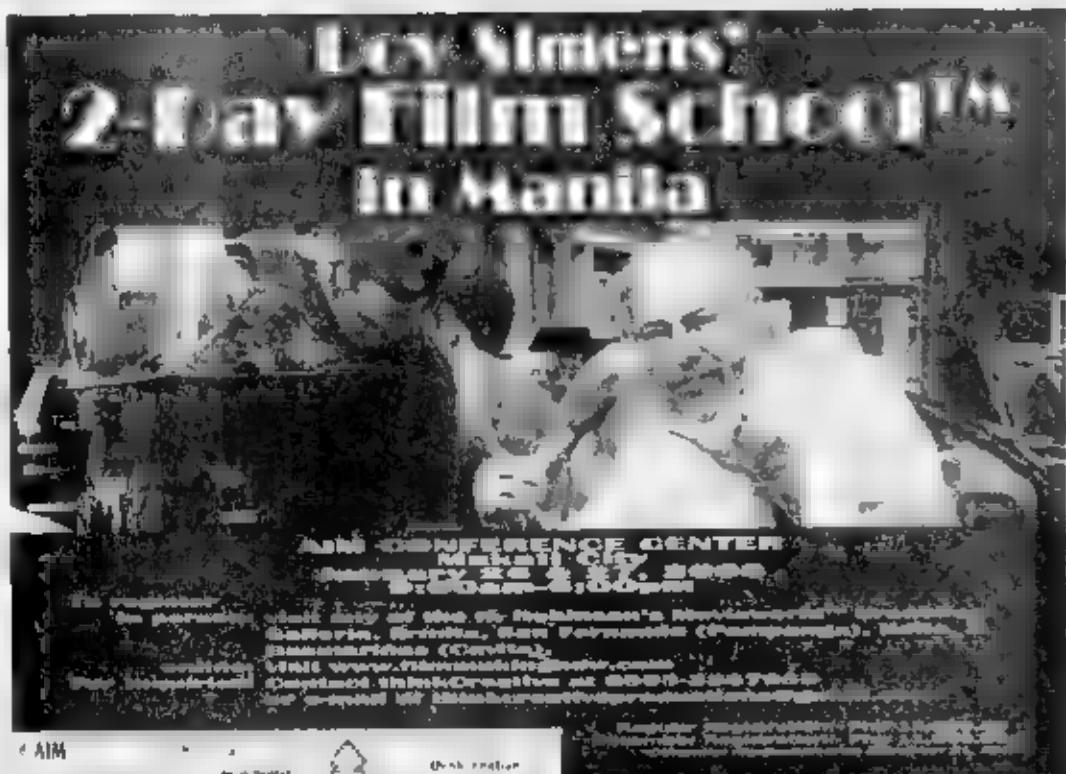
What if it all turns white?

Then I may have to reconsider.

You were referred to as the oldest American Idol in the early part of the contest. Did that affect you?

You could say I was the oldest and the wisest! I knew it was up to America to vote. Some of the judges' comments, I just let them roll off my back.

Clive Davis (record company boss) signed up



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GREENBELT 3	1 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	2 RESIKLO	3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9	4 BAHAY KUBO
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	5 BAHAY KUBO	6 KABISOTE 4	7 RESIKLO	5 BAHAY KUBO
AYALA CENTER CEBU	3 KATAS NG SAUDI	4 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	5 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	6 BAHAY KUBO
MARKET! MARKET!	1 BAHAY KUBO	2 KATAS NG SAUDI	3 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
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Ayala

glorietta

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December 18, 7pm, Glorietta 4 Park

GREENBELT

Taylor Hicks Live!  
December 18, 7pm, Greenbelt 3 Park

ALABANG TOWN CENTER

Christian Bautista Live!  
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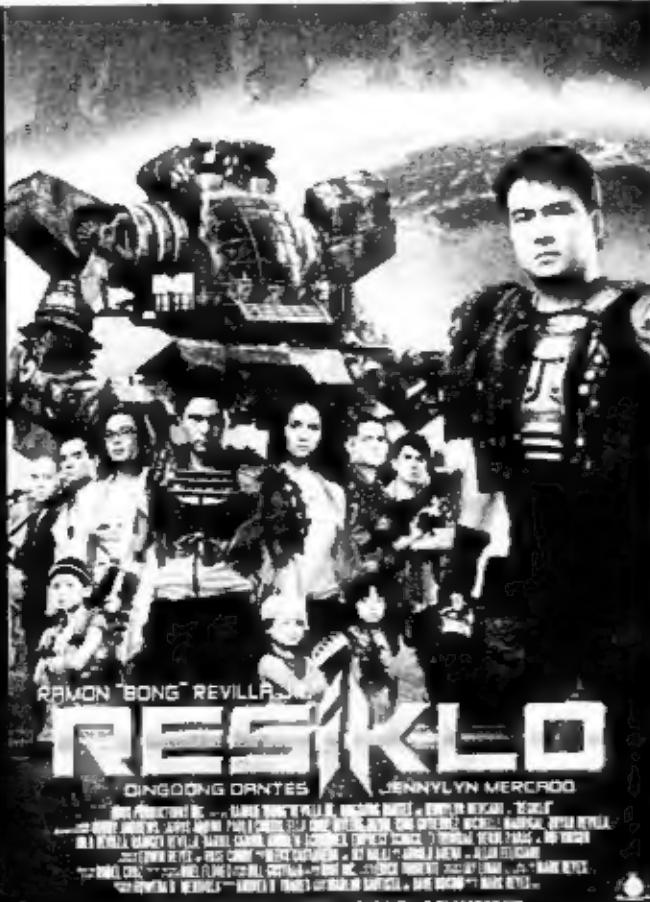
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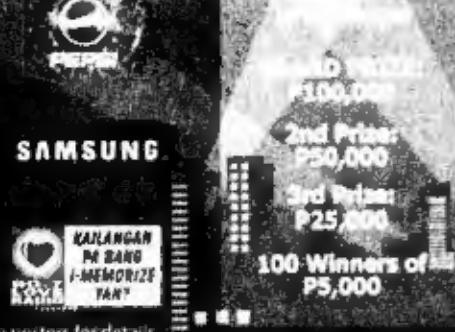


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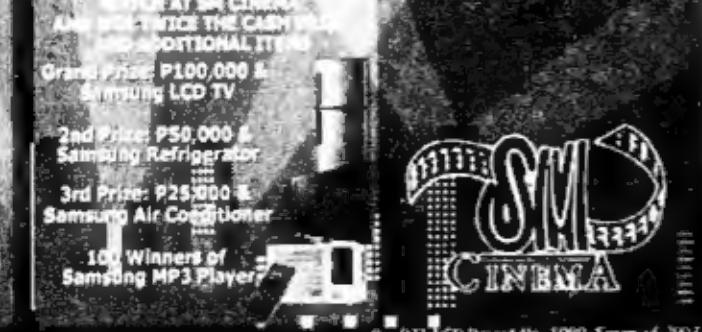
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9 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO

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16th prize of P60

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He's giving acting another go

EARLY IN HIS SHOW BIZ CAREER, GARY Valenciano acted in a couple of movies. Later, however, he chose to focus on his singing career, to great acclaim.

What about acting? It didn't come as naturally to him as singing, composing

## Gary V stretches his limits

and dancing. Besides, he hesitated to play "negative" roles, because it might set the wrong example.

Others chose to disagree, however. They pointed out that even negative characters could have a "teaching" effect, because they show young viewers the path not to take.

In addition, evil is dramatically useful because it provides an instructive contrast to goodness. If only goodness is portrayed in drama, they wouldn't benefit from the chiaroscuro highlighting that negative characters can provide.

### Convict role

Interestingly enough, after many years spent concentrating on his music career, Gary V has been giving acting another go of late. In the 2007 Cinemalaya festival, he played a featured role in "Gulong," written by Jeanne Lim and directed by Socorro Fernandez. And, just

### VIEWFINDER



Nestor U. Torre

last Dec. 14 on Channel 2's "Maalaala Mo Kaya," he portrayed a convict.

Gary V as a convict? Hey, wait a minute, we thought he didn't like playing negative characters? Well, it turns out that Gary's convict role wasn't such a stretch, after all, because he was innocent of the crime he was accused of.

Still, the conflicted convict was a different kind of (small) screen persona for Gary, and he should be encouraged to play more such "dark" and "textured" characters.

Not that Gary was completely effec-

tive in the role. To his credit, the singer-actor looked rough and troubled for the part. But, the character's more important inner struggle and pain generally eluded him, and his performance lacked the bite and brio it needed to be completely credible and moving.

### Unmapped territory

We can say the same of his shorter portrayal in "Gulong," where he was miscast. Despite these less than overwhelmingly positive notes, however, we feel that Gary has reached a new phase in his performing career by playing characters less sterling than himself, and if he continues to explore this relatively unmapped (for him) territory, it could eventually result in a great performance.

To make this likelier, Gary should strive to understand the "dark" characters he plays beyond the way they look, speak and behave. Some fear that this could be difficult for him, since he may live in a "protected" stellar and spiritual environment, and doesn't really make it a point to observe "ordinary" people where they live and breathe.

But he has to make up for this slack, because this direct observation and emotional involvement are essential to coming up with acutely believable and gritty performances, which are the hallmarks of competent and insightful thespians.

This piece of unsolicited advice also goes out to other well-intentioned actors who fall short on point of credibility and empathy. They need to go beyond superficial details to understand the positive and negative impulses of the characters they portray.

## Just happy . . .

From page E2

Chris Daughtry (2007 AI fourth placer) even earlier than you.

Chris deserves all that. He's a rock singer and songwriter. Considering how popular rock music is right now, that's a no-brainer.

Before AI, you spent time in Nashville pursuing your music career, although it didn't pan out.

I was trying to make it for 10 years. I did everything possible and created every opportunity just to make it. I thought Nashville was a good place for me, at the time, to be heard. It taught me a lot about myself.

Are you proud to be called a white soul/R&B singer?

I'm just proud to be a musician, to play music for a living.

How do you see yourself 10 years from now?

Completely white hair. But hopefully still playing music, touring, maybe sitting here with you for another interview.

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GENERAL PATRONAGE

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## Lessons that 2007 taught the stars

IT'S THE DAY AFTER Christmas. Time to unwrap our gifts and unburden our hearts. As we anticipate the coming of the New Year, let's look back on the lessons that 2007 taught us, as these following celebs did.

**Lorna Tolentino:** "Everything is in God's hands. We can do our best but in the end, it is all up to Him. We just have to keep believing."

**Marvin Agustin:** "Luck can be created. The harder you work, the luckier you will be. I also learned to value friends and relatives more than anything in this world."

**Miriam Quiambao:** "The greatest lesson I learned this year is about forgiveness and accep-



LORNA Tolentino



MARVIN Agustin

tance. Acceptance of what has happened and of what is; forgiving mistakes of the past and most of all forgiving myself. That made me love myself more."

**Dieether Ocampo:** "I've learned to forgive quickly and never to regret anything I've done."

**Christine Bersola:** "When you are a vessel and channel for God's blessings to pass through, you shouldn't fret because God always provides."

**Joey Javier Reyes:** "Life is an experience both humbling and challenging. It is all a matter of learning your lesson each day."

**Rachel Alejandro:** "I

was always a bit of a worrier and tried very hard to make sure things go the way I planned. This year, I learned that instead of preparing for the worst, I should anticipate only the best. Whatever I set my mind on, I can achieve if I really believe."

**Christian Bautista:** "Trust in the Lord with all your heart no matter what happens."

**Valerie Concepcion:** "God is always in control even Mr. & Ms. Sexy Body."

when your life seems to be out of control. You just have to lift every burden up to Him."

**John Estrada:** "No two women are the same. You can't love one the way you loved another. Every girl has different needs that are quite unique."

**Polo Ravales:** "Blessings become more meaningful if you share them with others."

## Stars at the mall

Join the festivities on Dec. 30 at Sta. Lucia East Grand Mall, when it ushers in the New Year with Gueshe, Nadine Samonte, Private Dancers and Callalily. The performers will be joined by the winners of Generation East Model Search, the Search for Little Stars and



CHRISTIAN Bautista

## Gift idea

Have you given everyone your Christmas list a gift? Consider an Xtreme Magic Sing mic. It comes with a free song chip—and voice lessons from Center for Pop till Jan. 31. That's KaraOKAY with a twist!

E-mail [wateringholeshangtala@yahoo.com](mailto:wateringholeshangtala@yahoo.com)

## Cinema board gives 2 films 'B' rating

By Marinel R. Cruz

A FILM ABOUT TWO COPS WHO UNDERGO SWAT training, and another about a young man who goes to prison after accidentally killing a boy, each received a "B" rating from the Cinema Evaluation Board.

Cesar Apolinario's "Banal" got the judges' nod for "correct portrayal of the movement of Philippine media," according to CEB chair Christine Dayrit.

"Banal," an entry to this year's Metro Manila Film Festival, tells the story of two policemen, the idealistic Cris (Paolo Contis) and the scheming and corrupt Jason (Alfred Vargas), who forge an unlikely friendship while in training.

The film, produced by ComGuild Films, "sets a new tempo for Pinoy action films," said a CEB board member.

First-time filmmaker Apolinario has a "firm grasp of the material," said Dayrit, citing a CEB reviewer. The movie is "well-researched," she added.

## Almost an "A"

"Banal" would have gotten an "A" grade, had the editing been "tighter," the CEB chief said.

"Banal" also features Christopher de Leon, Paolo Paraiso, Joey Smith, Leo Martinez, Roy Alvarez, Cass Ponti, Ina Alegre and Evangeline Pascual.

A B rating entitles a movie to a 65-percent tax rebate, said Dayrit.

The CEB Board describes Paolo Villaluna and Ellen Ramos' "Seida" as "a beautifully filmed masterpiece."

"It's like watching a fluid Amorsolo painting [while] depicting the harsh realities of being in jail and the even harsher pains outside," said Dayrit, quoting a CEB reviewer.

"Seida" tells the story of Rommel (Sid Lucero), who accidentally kills a boy and is imprisoned. He befriends fellow inmate, Esteban (Emilio Garcia). Seven years later, Rommel is living in the province as a farmer with Sita (Ara Mina), his wife. Esteban tracks down Rommel in hopes of renewing a brewing love affair. Rommel and Sita welcome Esteban into their home, "until their intimacy crosses borderlines and results in the undeniable scourge of self-discovery."

The movie is a follow-up to Villaluna and Ramos' highly acclaimed romantic drama "Ilusyon."

A CEB member, however, pointed out that the film was "so beautifully shot that [its director] fell in love with it and had difficulty trimming it." The performances rendered by Lucero, Garcia and Ara Mina were commendable, Dayrit added.

Also in the film are Michael de Mesa, Allan Paule, Soliman Cruz and Ping Medina.



SCARY NEW YEAR. Susan Roces and Kris Aquino lead the cast of "Patayin sa Sindak ni Barbara," a teleserye that kicks off 2008 for ABS-CBN. It is adapted from the 1974 horror movie that starred Roces. Also in the cast of the TV series are Albert Martinez, Jodi Sta. Maria-Lacson, Maja Salvador, Jay-R, Kitkat, Eva Darren and Celine Lim.

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## 'Best of Discovery' specials

DISCOVERY CHANNEL FEATURES My Chemical Romance getting inked. The series airs every Wednesday beginning Jan. 2, 10 p.m., with episodes encoring every Saturday at 11 p.m.

## Extreme behaviors

Animal Planet presents an all-



"DIRTY Jobs: Sewer Inspector"



"MOST Extreme"



"WEST Side Story"



"L.A. Ink"

let explodes from a sewer backup.

## Tattoo culture

Discovery Travel & Living's new series, "L.A. Ink," digs deep into the tattoo culture and the artists behind it, capturing more stories behind the tattoos, and life in and out of the newest and hottest tattoo shop in Los Angeles.

This season, viewers can catch celebrity clients like Hip Hop star Eve, Queen of Porn Jenna Jameson, ex-Skid Row frontman Sebastian Bach, Jesse Metcalfe of Desperate Housewives fame, Anthrax guitarist Scott Ian and Frank Iero of the band

My Chemical Romance getting inked. The series airs every Wednesday beginning Jan. 2, 10 p.m., with episodes encoring every Saturday at 11 p.m.

The series airs Wednesdays beginning Jan. 2 at 8 p.m., with encores on Sundays at 10 a.m.

## Award-winning musical

MGM Channel's prime time movie feature on Jan. 1, 9 p.m., is the musical "West Side Story," directed by Jerome Robbins and Robert Wise.

Winner of 10 Academy Awards including Best Picture, the musical sets the ageless tragedy of Romeo and Juliet in the slums of 1950s New York and stars Natalie Wood and Richard Beymer.

**Bahay Kubo**  
A Pinoy Mano Po!

A Film by Joel C. Lamangan, dpp

Maricel Soriano, Eric Quizon, Marian Rivera, Shaina Magdayao, Mark Herras, Yasmien Kurdi, Eugene Domingo, Jiro Mamo, Bearwin Melly, Isabella de Leon, Sam Bumayay, Rita Iringan

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# Maayong Pag-abot sa mga Smart Pinoy!

## Home for the holidays, OFWs get a Grand Salubong from Smart Pinoy at the Mactan-Cebu International Airport.

Gone for two years, working as a domestic helper in DOHA, Qatar, Elsa Menchavez couldn't wait to be reunited with her five children and was excited to be spending Christmas back home. So, when Qatar Airways flight B58 arrived at the Mactan-Cebu International Airport (MCIA), she was the first to get off.

Beating everyone else to the arrival area, Elsa was the first to step into a surprise welcome for returning Filipino workers led by officials of Smart Communications, Inc. (SMART), the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), and the Mactan-Cebu International Airport Authority (MCIAA).

### A Hero's Welcome

The launch of the "SMART Pinoy OFW Grand Salubong" at MCIA was a festive affair packed with lots of surprises.

"We are honored that OWWA and the MCIAA have given us this opportunity to pay tribute to our Overseas Filipino Workers arriving in Cebu this holiday season. We hope that they enjoy the prizes and surprises that we have prepared for them," said Danilo J. Mojica, head of SMART's Wireless Consumer Division.

Upon arrival, our modern-day heroes received leis from SMART celebrity endorsers led by comedy king Dolphy, Viva Hot Babe Jhen Rosendahl, child star Steven Ferro, and tv personality Epy Qulzon who hosted the short welcome program together with Metat Casino of DOLE.

Each of them also got a chance to win premium items including SMART cell phones and Wow Magic Sing microphones in an instant win pick-a-prize treat.

Cocktails were served at the arrival area, and entertainment was provided by the Southwestern University Dance Troop and the Department of Tourism's Rondalla.

### Three Months of Surprises

A three-month tribute to OFWs, SMART Pinoy OFW Grand Salubong will run until February 28, 2008. Through this project, SMART, OWWA and the MCIAA, with partners Isuzu Philippines and Wow Magic Sing, wish to give homage to our hard working countrymen who continue to provide invaluable contribution to the Philippines.

A total of 136 prizes will be raffled off in the Smart Pinoy OFW Salubong Grand Draw on February 28, 2008. These include 25 Wow Magic Sing microphones, 30 Smart Bro computer

packages, 50 flight miles equivalent to a domestic flight for two, 30 Smart e-Load businesses and a brand new Isuzu Crosswind XTi Limited Edition.

For a chance to win in the grand raffle, returning Filipino workers need only to register their SMART SIMs to automatically earn one electronic raffle. Additional raffle entries can be earned when they use any of Smart's international services.

### Cebu: Center of Visayas and Gateway to Mindanao

In the coming months OFWs going home to Visayas and those en route to Mindanao are expected to arrive at the Mactan-Cebu International Airport.

"Our kababayans are known to have made a lot of sacrifices. It is but fitting that even once a year, as they come home to their families, we make them feel how much we appreciate what they have done for us," said B/Gen. Danilo Augusto B. Francia, general manager of MCIAA.

"It will be a warm and VIP welcome for them," according to Wilfreda Mistarao, Regional Director of OWWA 7.

### Tribute through Service

The grand salubong is also SMART's way of thanking Filipino overseas workers for their patronage of SMART's growing line of innovative international services that keep them close to home and constantly in touch with their families wherever their work brings them.

"As the Philippines' biggest mobile network to the world, SMART will continue to give tribute to our OFWs through the creation of services and products which cater not only to their communication needs but also to their livelihood projects," said Jojo Maiolos, head of International Business, SmartHub Financial Services Group.

Smart Pinoy was launched late last year as part of SMART's efforts to better serve the global Filipino. Its products and services are available in over 200 countries abroad in partnership with over 400 international network partners. These include IDD, international SMS and MMS, value-added services like international voice text and voice text to email, airtime reloading via Smart Load and remittance service like Smart Padala.

It is because of these services that Elsa and other 'Smart Pinoy' have the fastest, easiest and most affordable means to connect and stay close to their loved ones all year-round.



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